PARKWATER

MRS. HENRY WOOD

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AND OTHER STORIES



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AND OTHER STORIES

BY

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"EAST LYNNE," "THE CHANNINGS," "JOHNNY LUDLOW," ETC.

FIFTY-FIFTH THOUSAND



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PARKWATER.

CHAPTER I.

BRINGING UP.

In a certain quiet street of London, chiefly if not entirely filled by lawyers and their offices, there flourished some years ago the eminent firm of Lyvett, Castlerosse and Lyvett. An extensive practice had they; and certain other firms in the street would watch with an envious eye the shoals of letters and deeds delivered at their doors by the morning postman, wishing that only a tenth part of such shoals would come to them. The partners bore the character of honourable men; and certainly they were so. The three floors in the house were consecrated to business. The ground-floor was chiefly appropriated to clerks; on the first-floor were the private and consulting-rooms of the partners; and on the next story were clerks' rooms again. This left free the kitchens,

which were under-ground, and the attics in the roof; in which apartments dwelt a man of the name of May, his wife and daughter. May was the trusty porter or messenger of the firm, took care of the house on Sundays and at nights, and was much esteemed by his employers as an honest, respectable servant. Mrs. May cleaned the offices, made the fires, and scoured the stairs, and Miss May was a damsel of ten years old. She was being brought up—well, we shall see how.

Mr. Lyvett, the first partner in the firm, was a wealthy man. Apart from the proceeds arising from a long and successful practice (which had come down to him from his father), his wife, who was of good family, had brought him a large fortune. They lived at the West-End, and mixed more in fashionable life than it is usual for lawyers to do. All Mrs. Lyvett's connections lay amidst it; and Mr. Lyvett himself was of fairly good descent. Their family consisted of two sons, James and Frederick, and several daughters. James was already taken into partnership, and his name was the third in the firm. He was married, and had a house of his own. Frederick, the youngest of the family, was not yet a partner.

One winter's night, a clerk chanced to remain at the office beyond the usual hour. When the rest of the clerks departed, he stayed behind. It was young Mr. Jones. He was just articled, had copied a deed care-

lessly and imperfectly, and so was ordered to remain over-hours and copy it again. A strict disciplinarian was Mr. Rowley, the overlooking clerk of Lyvett, Castlerosse and Lyvett The porter was out that evening, and Mrs. and Miss May were in the kitchen; the former washing up the tea-things, the latter seated on a low chair, and devouring by the blaze of the fire the fresh number of *Caterpillar's Penny Weekly Repository of Romance:* Caterpillar being a popular writer with the million.

"Anything new there, Sophiar?" asked the mother.

"Law, ma, yes! Such a splendid tale! 'The Knight of the Blood-Red-Hand.' It begins beautiful."

"You'll try your eyes reading by firelight, Sophiar. Come to the candle."

"I wish you wouldn't make a fuss," was Miss Sophia's answer.

"You'll not read long, I can tell you. As soon as ever I have finished these tea-things, I'm a-going to clear the pianer, and you'll come and practise."

The young lady gave a jerk with her shoulders, and a kick with her feet, both of which movements might be taken as emblematical of rebellion. Mrs. May was a foolish woman. To say the least of it, she was so in regard to her child. All her own spare time was devoted to devouring a certain kind of unwholesome literature, supplied then as extensively to the "million"

as it is now; perhaps more so. It served to fill her head with the most ridiculous notions; and May, her husband, sanctioned them. Mrs. May had resolved that the child, Sophia, should be brought up a "lady; edicated, and raised above her spere," as she rather often expressed it. In this resolve she was upheld not only by May, but by her own sister, a Miss Foxaby, who was a lady's-maid in a very fine family somewhere up West. Sophia had no objection in the world; she was already an incipient coquette, inordinately vain, and quite as much at home in the intricacies of the *Weekly Repository of Romance* as was her mother. Poor child! Poor child! its pernicious teachings were growing with her growth, and strengthening with her strength.

Mrs. May was as good as her word. She cleared the square piano, which appeared to be laden with miscellaneous articles of culinary utility, not generally found in association with pianos; opened it, and put one of the wooden chairs before it. Miss Sophia, however, declined to disturb herself.

"What was the good of your father a-buying of the hinstrument, and what's the good of your having a genus for music, if you don't practise?" demanded Mrs. May. "Come, miss, no shuffling. And you have not looked at your book-lessons yet."

"Ma, how you do bother!"

"Come this minute, I say, or I'll put you to bed and give them stupid romances to me," added Mrs. May, snatching the leaves out of the child's hand.

"You don't call them stupid when you read them yourself; and *you* don't like to be disturbed at them, though you disturb me," raved the girl, in a voice between screaming and sobbing. "The other night, when father kept asking for his supper, you were in the thick of the 'Blighted Rose,' and you wouldn't stir from it; and he had to get out the bread and cheese himself, and fetch the beer!"

"Never you mind that, miss. You come to the pianer, as I bid you. It's not your place to reflect on me."

Sophia, finding resistance useless, flung a few books on the chair to make it higher, and flung herself upon them, dashing into what she called "the scales" and her mother "the jingles." Mrs. May drew a chair before the fire, placed her feet on the iron fender, snuffed the candle on the table behind her, opened the publication she had taken from her daughter. Before however, she was fairly immersed in its beauties, or the first few bars of the jingles had come to an end, a tremendous noise overhead caused them both to start.

"Sakes alive!" uttered Mrs. May—a favourite exclamation of hers: "what's that?"

A somewhat prolonged noise, as of a stool or chair

being moved violently about, was now heard. Sophia jumped off the books.

"Mother! suppose it should be an apparition!"

"Suppose it should be a robber!" was the more practical remark of Mrs. May. "He may have stolen in to kill us, while he walks off with the law papers. I *daren't* go and see."

"*I'll* go and see," answered Sophia. "I'm not afraid of robbers; and I don't suppose they'd hurt me."

She took the candle from the table, hurried fearlessly upstairs, and knocked at the front office door.

Mr. Jones, the young clerk, not being used to solitary evening employment, had dropped asleep over his work, with his stool on the balance. Certain musical sounds caused him to awake with a start, when he and his stool went down together. Picking himself and his stool up irascibly, he inflicted on the latter sundry bumps on the floor, by way of revenge, and was just settling to his copy again, when the knock came to the door.

"Come in," cried he, sullenly.

Very much astonished he looked when the intruder presented herself: a blue-eyed, pretty child, with flaxen hair that curled on her shoulders. Dressed well, she would have been an elegant child: but, dressed as she was, in all the colours of the rainbow, flaunty, dirty, and with a profusion of glass beads

glittering about her as necklace and bracelets, she looked like a little itinerant actress at a country fair.

"Why! who and what are you?" demanded the young gentleman.

"If you please, we did not know anybody was left," replied Sophia. "When the noise came, we thought it was a robber got in, so I came up to see; but ma was afraid."

"Who on earth's 'ma'?" repeated Mr. Jones, unable to take his eyes off the child.

"My ma. Downstairs."

"Do you live here?"

"Yes," said she, drawing herself up. "I am Miss May"

"Oh, indeed!" returned the young man. "Was not that a piano tinkling? It was the sound of that startled me up, and sent the stool off its legs. The first time I ever heard of a piano in a lawyer's office."

"It's mine, sir. Father bought it for me."

"Yours! Where do you keep it?"

"In the kitchen," answered the little girl. "We moved the dresser out into the back place, where the copper is, to make room for it. It's opposite the windows, and I practise at night when I come home from school."

"Why don't you give us a serenade in the daytime?" demanded young Mr. Jones, delighted at the amuse-

ment which appeared to be striking up. "We might get up a waltz when the governors are out."

Miss May shook her head.

"Father says it must *never* be opened till everybody's gone; the gentlemen would not like it. So ma keeps dishes and things atop of it all day, for fear I should forget and unlock it, when I'm at home from school at twelve o'clock."

"Well, this is a rum go!" muttered Mr. Jones to himself. "How many brothers and sisters have you, child?"

"I have not got any of either. And that's why ma says she can afford to spend more upon me. I'm to be a lady when I grow up."

"Thank you, my little girl, for the information. You look like one. I should say you might be taken for an Arabian-Nights' princess: only you are too smart."

The child took the mocking compliment to be meant in earnest. She bridled her head; her unoccupied hand stole up to twirl round the ends of her pretty ringlets. In the endowment of vanity, Nature has been prodigal to many of us, but she had been remarkably so to Sophia May.

"Sophiar!" called out a voice, timid and panting, from the lower regions "Sophiar! What is it?"

"Who is that?" quickly asked Mr. Jones.

That's ma. She—— "

Sophiar, I say! Who are you talking to? Who *is* there?" repeated the voice.

"Ma," answered the child, putting her head out at the door to speak, "it's one of the gentlemen, not yet gone."

Up raced Mrs. May, flurried and dubious. Mr. Jones recognized her as the lady he had seen on her hands and knees, cleaning the front door-step the first morning he came, when he had misunderstood the clerks' time, and had arrived an hour too early. She knew him as the young clerk recently entered, whose friends were intimate with the Lyvetts.

"Bless me, sir! I should not have took upon myself to send Sophiar in here, but we thought everybody was gone, and was alarmed at the noise. Sophiar, miss"—changing her tone to a very angry one—"when you saw it was all right, why didn't you come away again directly?"

"Don't put yourself out, Mrs. May; she has done no harm. What time do you get this office open in the morning?" he added, as if struck with some sudden thought.

"About half-past seven, sir, these dark mornings. I begin with this floor first. But I get all my sweeping over and the fires alight before I sit down to my breakfast."

"Then I'm blest if I won't knock off for to-night, if I can get in at that hour," ejaculated Mr. Jones. "I shall have time to finish this beastly thing before old Rowley comes. But he had best mind, again, how he gives me my day's writing to do over twice, for I won't stand it. Good-night to you, Dame May. Put out the gas."

"Sophy," said Mrs. May, when they returned to the kitchen, "did he hear the sound of the pianer?"

Sophy nodded in the affirmative.

"What did he say?"

"He asked if the piano was here; and I told him it was, and was ours."

"Then you were a little ape for your pains. You should have told him that it was a sound from the next house; and stood to it that it was, if he'd disputed it. Your father don't want the Mr. Lyvetts and Mr. Castlerosse to know of the pianer; they'd make a fuss, perhaps. Never scruple to tell a fib, child, in a necessary cause."

"Can I have that paper now?" asked Sophia.

"No," snapped Mrs. May, "I have hardly begun it. Get on with your jingles."

From the above little episode of one evening, the reader may gather somewhat of the manner in which Sophia May was being trained. It need not be enlarged upon. Her parents were making that most

reprehensible and fatal mistake of rearing her to be above her station; *above themselves.* Such mistakes were not so common in those days as now, for what I am writing of took place many years ago; but, as the world knows, they are springing into mad fashion at present. No training for the working classes can be more pernicious, or is likely to bring forth more disastrous fruits. In Sophia May's case—and hers is a true history—the error was added to by her being allowed the run of those wretched weekly romances. Sophia's parents had married late in life, and were decent, hard-working people; and if they had had the good sense to make their child hard-working too, they would have given her comfort and content for her portion. Mrs. May had been an inferior servant in a family of distinction, had picked up some exalted ideas, and the publications she had addicted herself to reading did not tend to sober them. Undoubtedly the child was a pretty, fairy-looking little thing; and a fancied resemblance to one of the aristocratic daughters in the family in which Mrs. May had served, first put ridiculous notions for Sophia into her brain. The father was more sensible; but he was so ardently attached to this only child that he too readily fell into the snare, and upon that one point was now as extravagant as his wife. For their station they were in easy circumstances. The man's wages sufficed for

their wants, in the humble way they were accustomed to live; Mrs. May had saved money, and Miss Foxaby was ever ready to produce funds to be spent on her pretty niece Sophia. She furnished not only funds, but clothes. All the very smart things Sophia flourished in came from her: cast-off relics of the family she served. Strange that the father and mother could not see the incongruity of what they were doing! The child, with her flounces and furbelows, her music and dancing, her pernicious romance-reading, and her fostered vanity; and they, with their household drudgery, living amidst their kettles and saucepans and cooking and cleaning! What an absurdity it all was!

Sophia went to a day-school in the neighbourhood, where she mixed with a rather better class of children as to position: indeed the mistress had refused to take her at first on the score of her parentage. There she picked up some learning, and left off some of her idioms. The way in which the child was dressed out on a Sunday was something wonderful to behold. Muslins in summer, satins in winter, streamers of many colours, gaudy artificial flowers, and snow-white feathers! Nearly all of them were Miss Foxaby's gifts, and all of them had the first bloom off. In the morning of Sunday, the child would be, as the mother expressed it, "in her dirt,"

watching the preparations for dinner, or exercising at the piano, and at one o'clock fetching the beer from the public-house; for May liked to take as much rest as he could get on a Sunday, even from beer-fetching. But in the afternoon she was turned out in style, and told to "walk up and down the street that people might see her;" her father and mother, who on that day would sit at the windows of Mr. Lyvett's room on the first-floor, watching her with looks of love and admiration: the former with his pipe, and his beer in a pewter pot; the latter with her weekly newspaper, which, however, she could scarcely coax her eyes to read a line of, so absorbed was she with that vision pacing the quiet street in her young vanity, whose long-tailed silken steamers fluttered out behind her, to the amazement of every chance passer-by. They did not go to church; they did not take her. Now and then, indeed, Mrs. May would attend evening service with Sophia; but it was very rarely. They were moral, well-behaved people, the father and mother, but religion was not known in their house: that is, religious teaching and religious exercises.

What did they promise themselves would be the end of all this when the child grew up?—that she would be content to continue her abode with them, and live as they did! Where else was she to live? Poor Sophia May! events that really did

happen in after life were not so much her fault as the fault of her most foolish parents. And this is a true picture; a simple narrative of events that actually occurred.

CHAPTER II.

HOME FROM FRANCE.

SEVERAL years had gone by. One Thursday night in summer, the quiet street already mentioned (and it was the dullest and quietest street imaginable after business hours, when the various lawyers and their clerks had deserted it for the night) was aroused from its silence by the echoes of a cab, which came fast down it, and pulled up at the door of Lyvett, Castlerosse and Lyvett. What could the cab want there at that hour? Cabs, and carriages too, might be seen before the door in the day, many of them; but never at night.

"Why, if it's not old May!" exclaimed Miss Jenkins, putting her head out at the next-door window; she and her sister being laundresses to that house, which accommodated several firms. "Where has he been to in a cab? Here, Esther, come and have a look at old May in a cab!"

Miss Esther Jenkins quickly ran to the window.

A young lady in a blue veil was following old May out of the cab.

"Well, I never!" cried Miss Esther. "Who *can* it be, Martha? There's the gaslight on her face now—what a nice-looking young lady!"

"Why, it must be the daughter come home! She was expected, you know. Oh, it's nobody but her; you may rely upon it, Esther."

"I'll go in and see what she's like presently, when they are settled a bit," cried Miss Esther. "It's her, safe enough."

"Safe enough" it was. Miss May, who had been for two years at a school on the French coast, had now completed her education, and returned home for good. When Miss Esther Jenkins entered, she found her sitting in the kitchen with her parents. Sophia was eighteen now, and certainly very good-looking. The long curls she had worn as a child were now twisted in a peculiar way, "French and fashionable," Miss Jenkins called it, round her head. She was above the middle height, and easy in her movements, very much pinched in about the waist, with fine falling shoulders, an admirably fitting dress, and a prodigious deal of pretension. Miss Jenkins stood, taking it all in at a glance, and noting various items in her mind, especially the young lady's first declaration that she did not know

how she should get on in London, as she had forgotten her English.

Sophia turned to the place of the old piano. It was there still, and she opened it. She struck a few chords and started back with a scream.

"Mais, c'est horrible, ce piano-là! Je ne—— "

"Do try to speak in English, Sophiar," urged Mrs. May, with tears in her eyes. "How ever shall we get along if you don't? What is it that's the matter? Did you see anything that frightened you?"

"It is such a—what do you call it in English?—*dreadful* piano. I had as soon have touched an electric battery. It has set all my finest musical nerves on the jar: ma tête est percée. I shall never be able to touch it again: jamais."

"She has not quite forgot her mother-tongue," interposed Miss Jenkins. "Which is a consolation worthy of thanksgiving."

Sophia turned a sharp look upon her. There was a sarcastic ring in the words that she did not like.

"Did you have no English girls whatever at the school, Sophiar?" asked Miss Jenkins.

"Mais oui."

"Did you have no English girls whatever at the school?" repeated the visitor, apparently determined to persevere till she received a reply she could understand.

"Some of the young ladies were English."

"And did you never talk together?"

"De temps en temps. Now and then," more hastily added Sophia, perceiving the question was about to be repeated, as before.

"Then it's very singular how you can have forgot it at all," retorted Miss Jenkins, significantly, "for when schoolgirls get together they *do* talk."

The tone brought heat into the temper of Miss May. She cast a look of scorn on the offender, and coolly turned her back upon her.

"It is not agreeable to me to be troubled with strangers to-night," she said, more curtly than politely. "I am tired with my sea-voyage, Miss Jenkins, and the company of my father and mamma is as much as my nerves will support."

"Then I'll make myself scarce," said Miss Jenkins, who was more inclined to laugh than to take offence; "and come in some other time when you are in company cue, Sophia."

Sophia gave only a cold nod in answer. "How *can* I ever again support the companionship of these wretchedly low people?" ran her thoughts. Miss Jenkins was inwardly making her comments on *her*: tit for tat.

"I say, Esther," whispered Mrs. May, following Miss Jenkins upstairs to fasten the door, "she don't mean

no offence; she's only knocked up after the sea-sickness."

"Where no offence is meant, none is took," replied Miss Jenkins. "*I* know what the little tempers of young folks is. We was young ourselves once."

"But ain't she beautiful?" pleaded Mrs. May. "And such style! Nobody could take her to be anything but the real lady."

"Thoroughbred," responded Miss Jenkins. "Good-night."

"Good-night, Esther. Oh—I say! I wish you'd tell your Martha to beat her mats of a morning towards the house on your other side, instead of on this. She's later than I am, and her dust makes my steps and pavement in such a mess. One day Mr. Lyvett asked if I had cleaned them. Good-night."

"I wish 'em joy of her, Martha," were the first words of Miss Jenkins to her sister. "Such an affected, stuck-up fine lady you never saw. What they'll do with her in that kitchen, I can't tell. She wants a saloon and a pair of footmen."

"What can they do with her!" debated Miss Jenkins. "If they've only a kitchen, they can't put her in a parlour."

"*I* don't know. Rely upon it, she'll never reconcile herself to staying there with them."

"She's handsome, is she not, Esther?"

"A handsome face, and a handsome figure; I don't say to the contrary: but she has an ugly look, if she's put out. I know this: if fortune had blessed me with a daughter, I'd rather see her a female travelling tinker, than I'd bring her up to be a fine lady, not being one myself."

Before the following day was over, Mrs. May awoke to the same fact that Miss Esther Jenkins had only suspected—Sophia would never remain at home with them. Was it likely that she would? She, with her good looks, and her semi-education; her superficial accomplishments, and her mind formed on Caterpillar's romances!—could her father and mother expect her to make her home in a kitchen, amidst kettles and saucepans?

"Your Aunt Foxaby says she can get you a beautiful place as head lady's-maid, Sophiar," remarked Mrs. May. "Your French tongue——"

"My Aunt Foxaby says—what?" interrupted Sophia, turning to face her mother. "Get me a place as lady's-maid! Why, do you suppose, or does she suppose, that I would become a servant?"

"But you'd live quite the life of a lady, Sophiar," replied poor Mrs. May. "Them ladies'-maids in a good place mostly does."

"For goodness' sake don't talk nonsense!"

"Well, my dear, I don't see what else you be to do,

if you can't reconcile yourself to staying along of us here."

Sunday came. And after dinner Mr. May started to Hyde Park, to fetch his wife's sister, impatient that she should feast her eyes with the improvement in Sophia. Mrs. May began to wash up the dishes, and Sophia ascended to the "Sunday windows," and sat down there. She held in her hand the weekly newspaper, but she glanced at it discontentedly. The fruits of her education were already beginning to show themselves. She had been discontented ever since she came home. A slight dispute with her mother, arising out of her own ill-temper, had occurred the previous day, in which she had said that the home was no fit home for her, and that the vulgar atmosphere of a kitchen would kill her. Her residence in France had not tended to improve the tone of her mind and heart, however it may have helped her French. She had been to one of the cheap seminaries there: twenty pounds a year, paid quarterly in advance, included everything, from the first day of January to the thirty-first of December. Shrewd Miss Esther Jenkins might have spoken out her opinion of them, had she gone to pass a week in one, as to their eligibility for a girl who was to be "a lady."

Sophia May sat at the first-floor window, feeling

very miserable, longing for excitement, vowing that she would not long put up with this, and sullenly glancing over the "bête" newspaper. After the beauties of Eugène Sue's novels, which the school had procured en cachette, English literature was tame, even that of a sensational weekly paper. Suddenly she threw it down with a gesture of impatience; and, dashing open the window, looked from it up the street, wondering how much longer her father and aunt would be.

They were not in sight. Not a soul was in it, save one; on a Sunday it was always particularly empty. This one, who was a foppishly-dressed, though not ungentlemanly-looking young man, was coming down it with a quick step. He halted at the door beneath, and knocked; a thundering knock. Sophia, who had drawn back, peeped out again, and saw a somewhat simple countenance, a moustache that would have been fair had there been enough of it to be seen, light blue eyes, and an eye-glass stuck in one of them.

She would not have answered the door for the world; so poor Mrs. May, who was in the attic with her gown off, had to throw a shawl over her black petticoat and hasten down; but not before a second and third knock had resounded through the house. She dropped a curtsy when she saw who it was.

"Oh, here's somebody at last! I thought you and May were asleep," was the gentleman's salutation.

"I hope you will be so good as to excuse it, sir. May is gone out, and I was at the top, a-cleaning of myself."

"Have you seen my cigar-case?" demanded the gentleman, entering the front office on the ground-floor. "I must have left it here last night."

"I have not been into the rooms, sir. I don't generally go in till Monday morning."

"I must find it," he resumed, looking about. "I had put some prime cigars in it, ready for to-day; and the shops that keep anything worth smoking shut themselves up on a Sunday, and be hanged to them! You need not wait, Mrs. May. I can let myself out."

"Shall I look in the rooms upstairs, sir?"

"No, it's not there. It is here, if it's anywhere."

Mrs. May retreated upwards; and the gentleman, after an unsuccessful search, marched upstairs himself, whistling some bars from the last night's opera. But his tune came to an abrupt close; for, on opening the door of his father's room, he found himself, to his extreme astonishment, face to face with a lady.

She had risen at his entrance. A handsome girl with confident manners, whose fair hair was braided round her head in elaborate twists and turnings. Young men are not very competent judges of attire:

the eyes of this one only took in the general effect of the lady's dress, and that was splendid. It had once been an evening dress of Miss Foxaby's mistress. He hastily snatched off his hat and dropped his eye-glass.

Who in the world was she? As to her having any connection with Mrs. May, her dirty shawl and her black petticoat, such an incongruity never would have occurred to him. Though not usually wanting in fluency of speech, it rather failed him now, for he was at a loss how to address her.

"I beg your pardon," he was beginning, but she spoke at the same moment.

"Pardon, monsieur."

Oh, she was French, then! Had she crossed the Channel in a balloon, and been dropped into the offices of Lyvett, Castlerosse and Lyvett by mistake? How else had she come? and what did she want there? He began to recall his French, not a word of which had his tongue ever uttered since leaving school.

"Madame, voulez-vous excuser moi? Je suis—je trouve," and there he came to a standstill—what the dickens was "cigar-case" in French? Fortunately she helped him out.

"I beg to ask your pardon, a thousand pardons, for addressing you in French. I have been so long accustomed to speak only French, and having but

since a day or two returned to England, that I forget myself à chaque instant. I fear I am in your way? Shall I retire?"

"By no means. I will not disturb you for a moment. I am in search of a—a small parcel—which I mislaid yesterday."

As he spoke, his eyes fell on the "parcel." It was on the corner of the mantelpiece. At the same moment some vehicle came rattling down the street, turned round, and drew up at the door.

He took a step to the other window and looked from it. Not the one she was at. It was, as he expected, his own cab: the fashionable vehicle with young men at that day. He had walked from the chambers of a barrister close by, where he had been lounging away an hour, and had ordered his groom to follow him. With an elaborate bow (and certainly a respectful one) to the lady, he quitted her presence, descended the staircase, and departed by the front-door.

Again Sophia peeped from the window. She saw him open the "parcel," light a cigar, puff away at it, and step into the cab, which bore the Lyvett crest. The groom sprang to his place behind, and the smoke went puffing up the street. She had been at no loss to know him after the first moment. It was, in fact, young Mr. Lyvett.

"I wonder who she is, and what she does there?"

thought he as he drove onwards. "Don't much think my father would like—— "

The cab stopped. He pulled up the horse so suddenly that its head and fore-legs were jerked into the air. Mr. May and his sister-in-law were just passing down the pavement arm-in-arm.

"Hallo, May! Here."

Mr. May touched his hat, and leaving Miss Foxaby on the pavement, approached the cab, and touched his hat again.

"May! who the deuce is that, down yonder?"

"Sir?" cried Mr. May.

"Who's that lady in my father's private room?"

"I don't know who's there, sir," answered Mr. May. For it really did not occur to him that the gentleman present would not know his daughter. "You don't mean my wife or my—— "

"Your wife!" impetuously interrupted the young man, giving an admonishing touch to his impatient horse. "Who else will you ask me if I know? There's a lady there, I tell you. As handsome a girl as ever I saw."

Recollection dawned upon the porter.

"With light hair, sir, and coral beads in it, and a green-and-gold-looking dress on?"

"Green-and-gold for all I know. Something dazzling. She speaks French."

"It is Sophiar, sir."

"Eh? Who?"

'Our daughter, sir. She came home last Thursday She has been finishing of her education in France at a French school."

The gentleman stared for a few moments at Mr. May, as if unable to understand him. Then returned his cigar to his lips, nodded slightly, shook the reins, and was whirled round the corner on his way to his father's residence at the West End, where he dwelt.

"I'm sure I should think it's the first time any of 'em has come down on a Sunday," observed May to his sister-in-law, as they walked on. "There's Sophiar a-leaning out of the window."

Opening the door with his latch-key, Miss Foxaby rushed in and up the stairs, to clasp her niece in her arms.

"Oh my goodness heart, Sophia! how beautiful you do look! Well, if ever I saw anybody so much improved in all my life."

"I am grown, am I not, Aunt Foxaby?"

"Grown lovely, child. Ah, and somebody else thinks so: I could see it. Only think of his asking May who you were! Somebody we met in the street with his cab and groom, a-smoking his cigar, all so stylish!"

"Who was that gentleman, father?" inquired

Sophia. "I forgot myself as usual, and addressed him in French."

"Why, Sophiar, you don't mean to say as you've forgot him as well as your English?" cried the wondering father, who took all his daughter's airs to be genuine. "It was young Mr. Lyvett?"

"That it was a Lyvett I could see by the likeness; but I thought I should have remembered young Lyvett well. A haughty fellow, with black eyebrows, he used to be, who looked down upon everybody."

"Sophiar's thinking of the eldest son," interposed Mrs. May, who was now attired for the afternoon. "This one is Mr. Fred. He was articled to a firm in the country, Sophiar, some house in a different branch of law business, and was never much here until lately. No wonder you didn't remember him. But he is twenty-one now, and has come back for good. They do say he's to have a share in the business by-and-by, the same as his eldest brother have got. Mr. Fred is ten times nicer to speak to than Mr. James. He haven't got that proud way with him. Of course he's a deal younger."

"Ten years younger, I should say," remarked Sophia.

"Well, and I should think he is. Mr. Fred's not much more than a boy yet. Mr. James seemed older at sixteen than he do at twenty-one."

"What did he want down here to-day?" asked the

porter. "I don't think I ever knew any of 'em to have troubled us on a Sunday afore—as I was a-saying to Aunt Foxaby."

"He came after his cigars," said Mrs. May. "He said he left 'em behind him, yesterday. Leastways, the case."

"Sophia had better look out," cried Miss Foxaby, with a knowing nod. "Stranger things have happened. My dear, he said you were the handsomest girl he ever saw. And he took you for a real lady."

"Who said I was?" asked Sophia, quickly.

"Mr. Fred Lyvett."

"I could see he was struck with me," thought Sophia to herself. "But, ma foi, where's the use of that? He is a Lyvett."

Retiring to the kitchen to tea, Sophia's future prospects were discussed. Aunt Foxaby led to it by observing that Sophia, with her figure and her air, and her French, might command any situation she pleased as lady's own attendant; even to royalty she might almost aspire; and that all she would have to learn now was a little hair-dressing—dress-making would come to her "spontaneous."

Sophia's answer to this startled Aunt Foxaby, and nearly sent May off his chair. She meant to be a lady herself, she said, not maid to one; she was a

lady already; and she asked what they meant by putting so great an indignity upon her, even in idea. It was very unexpected; and with one tacit consent the subject was allowed to drop.

CHAPTER III.

MR. FRED LYVETT.

It is possible that even at this early stage, a faint idea of some mistake in the training of their daughter began to dawn upon May and his wife. That Sophia was no longer one of themselves, and never would be again, was easily to be seen. In habits, manners, education and ideas, she was above them; as Mrs. May might have expressed it, she had been "lifted into a different spere." And what could come of it? speaking only of the feelings. Nothing but cruel disappointment to themselves, and bitter mortification to her. Sophia had been brought up to be ashamed of her parents; or, rather, the shame was the result. They had educated her to be a lady (according to their notions of one), and really poor Sophia was not to be blamed if she responded to the rearing.

What her future was to be, what they should do with her, and where she was to live, gave concern to Mrs. May. But for the foolish pursuit of that low

literature which had warped her mind, she would have been rather a sensible woman; certainly she was a well-meaning one. Sophia plainly told her—and the tears stood in the girl's eyes as she said it—that she could never reconcile herself to sitting in the kitchen: she *could not.* Her meals she was obliged to take in it; but, after each one she retired to her own room in the attic. When the doors were shut and the shutters closed at night, she would then come back to the kitchen, sure of not being seen there by the world.

"This can't go on," sighed Mrs. May to her husband. "Whatever will be done with her? The poor child will eat her heart away."

A possible solution to it was to dawn. Not quite at first, but very soon. It came on by degrees; and even Mrs. May did not dare to dwell upon it—the fortune would be too good for Sophia.

Whether the fault was Mr. Frederick Lyvett's, or whether it was Miss May's, whether it arose by accident, or whether by design, certain it is, that in the course of the next week or two, they met and conversed together three or four times, in the street, or on the stairs. By the end of the second week they had become tolerably intimate. So that it probably did not surprise Sophia, though it did her father and mother, when on the following Sunday, early in the

afternoon, Mr. Fred appeared to escort Miss May to Westminster Abbey: which he had heard her express a wish to see; that she "might compare its architecture with that of the Roman Catholic churches she had been accustomed to admire in France."

Had Mr. Frederick Lyvett offered to take her to inspect a Roman Catholic purgatory in the fiery regions, it is certain that Mr. and Mrs. May would never have dared to offer an objection, so impressed were they with the honour done to their daughter in going anywhere with a Lyvett.

"You don't know how pleased I am that you consented to come with me," began Mr. Lyvett, as they set off.

"Did you think I should not?" asked Miss May.

"Well—our acquaintance has been so short that I thought you might object on that score. Still, I knew you were a sensible girl, without any stupid nonsense about you."

"Perhaps it is not quite comme-il-faut, my coming out like this, but it is so grateful to me to get, even for an hour, into congenial society, that I forget appearances. You must be aware that in my home (as I must perforce call it) there is no society for *me*."

"Certainly, old May and his—I mean Mr. and Mrs. May are very different from you. When he told me

that first Sunday that you were his daughter, I could not believe it."

"I *am* different," answered Sophia. "And how I shall manage to drag through my days in a place and position so unsuited to me, I cannot tell. I have been miserable ever since I returned. As a child, my social unhappiness did not strike me, but now I feel it deeply. I require refinement, Mr. Lyvett; it is as necessary to my nature as air; therefore you may judge what my home is to me. I believe, if I have to remain in it, I shall die of chagrin."

"I am sure I wish I could provide you with a better," said Mr. Lyvett, in an impulse of genuine sympathy.

Unfortunately, the young man was already falling over head and ears in love with her. The bright vision which had burst on his astonished senses that Sunday afternoon in his father's private room had made a lasting impression upon him. Every interview strengthened the feeling. He had never been in love before; but now his time had come. Frederick Lyvett was of a gentle, yielding nature. He had not the strong, sharp brains of his brother James, but he was not deficient in intellect; his feelings were strong and tender; in all his impulses he was strictly honourable, and Sophia was as safe with him as she would have been with a brother.

What with talking, and walking slowly, and looking at the fountains at Charing Cross, at the Horse Guards, and other points of interest, all of which he was delighted to show her, they arrived at Westminster Abbey just as the gates were closing after service. So all they had to do was to find their way back again, which they did with rather more speed; for Mr. Lyvett called a cab, the best-looking he could see on the stand, and escorted Sophia home in it, lest she should become tired.

Thus the acquaintance had begun, and thus it continued. Continued until the infatuated young man was really and truly deeply in love with Sophia May, and had formed a resolve that when his time for marrying came, no other than she should be his wife.

Sophia saw her ends gained, or in a fair way to be so. She did not love Frederick Lyvett: she looked upon him as rather "soft." He certainly was soft in regard to her. But she liked him very well. Apart from any ulterior views, she was grateful for his companionship; it was pleasant. She had ulterior views, however. The ruling passion of Sophia May's heart was ambition; with her training and her present drawbacks, it could not be otherwise: a craving for social standing, an intense eager longing to be lifted out of the low rank she was born in, and to live at

ease. As the wife of Frederick Lyvett all this would be hers.

It may be a matter of marvel to the reader that Mr. Frederick Lyvett, who had been reared in the prejudices of his position, should lower himself to make one in the house of his father's servants as (may we say it?) an equal; it was almost a marvel to Sophia. But that he did so, there was no disputing. The unfortunate fruits which these matters were to bear in after-years, caused their particulars to become well known. In the early stage of their acquaintance, she was his companion only out of doors, as on that expedition to Westminster Abbey, or in Mr. Lyvett's room on a Sunday afternoon. But later, when he was more infatuated, Mr. Frederick condescended to overleap all barriers, and became, as may be said, one with the family. Old May and his wife never forgot their respect: they were the humblest of the humble; and would sit at the very far corner of the kitchen when Mr. Frederick was in it, and hand him his tea—if he chose any—at a table different from theirs. Sophia felt the degradation for him perhaps more than he felt it for himself. Love, as we all know, softens everything; anomalies bend before it; incongruities are not seen. No doubt, at first Frederick Lyvett winced at the kitchen and its surroundings; but his love for Sophia was stronger than he

was. And he did look upon her as a very superior being; refined and cultivated as were his sisters. Love's eyes have generally a bandage over them; and he had one over his.

Sophia had persuaded her parents to part with the worn-out old piano which had so offended her nerves the night of her return, and to hire a better—she might not want one long there, she said—and Mr. Frederick Lyvett, who was passionately fond of music, would lean over her, enraptured, when she used it. She played and sang very well now: a thousand times better, Fred declared, than his sisters. Sophia did play and sing well. He was not blinded there. Her voice was sweet, and she had that aptitude for music which is sure to repay cultivation.

How long this might have gone on, and what would really have been the upshot, it is impossible to say; for Frederick Lyvett was too young to marry; neither was he yet thinking of it. It was hardly to be expected that he, used to refinement at home, would continue long to be hail-fellow-well-met with the office kitchen and his father's servants who inhabited it. But to Sophia's dismay and misfortune—yes, her deep, terrible misfortune—it was brought to an abrupt termination.

One day Mr. Rowley, the confidential clerk, who had been in the house for five-and-twenty years,

and who was a white-haired old gentleman of sixty, and a strict disciplinarian, left his own desk in the front office, gathered up some papers in his hand, and proceeded upstairs to Mr. Lyvett's room. The same room where Frederick and Sophia first met Mr. Lyvett was alone. He looked up from his table as his clerk entered.

"What papers are those, Rowley? Canton's case? Anything arisen?"

"No, sir. I want to say a few words to you, apart from business."

"What about?" asked Mr. Lyvett, in quick tones.

He was a stout man, with a pleasant eye and ready smile. His younger son must now resemble what he had been in his youth.

"And of course, sir, you will not hint to Mr. Frederick that you obtained your information from me. It would set him against me in a way that would be unpleasant. But I regard him and Mr. James more like my own sons, having nursed them as boys, and watched them grow up; and if I do open my mouth now, it is because I think his interests demand that I should do so."

"Why, what is it?" inquired Mr. Lyvett, in surprise. "Has Fred been up to anything?"

"You know that May has his daughter at home, sir?"

"May? Downstairs? I know nothing about it! What if he has?"

"She is a woman grown now, and a very handsome one. Plays and sings like a professional, they say, and——"

"*Plays* and *sings!*" echoed Mr. Lyvett, bursting into a laugh. "May's girl?"

"She does, sir: and that's not one half of the folly. They clubbed together, May and his wife and that Aunt Foxaby, and gave her a boarding-school education; and finally they sent her to a school in France, to be finished off with French airs and graces. No one would believe now she was old May's daughter: she is really an elegant girl."

"More fools they. But what has this to do with Frederick?"

"Why, he has made her acquaintance, sir, and I believe is over head and ears in love: otherwise he would never stand by her at that piano, by the hour together, as he does."

"What do you say?" cried the lawyer, hotly. "Stands by her where? What piano?"

"Their piano, sir. They have one here, down in the kitchen."

"A piano *here!*" repeated Mr. Lyvett, growing more astonished with each disclosure. "May has?"

"It is true. And there's where Mr. Frederick

spends his spare time. He will be in the kitchen night after night listening to that piano."

"I'll piano him. I have noticed that he has not often put in an appearance at dinner lately; but as he is a steady young fellow, I have not particularly questioned him where he got to."

"Well, sir, that's where. Down below, with May's people."

"Donkey! But if May and his wife bring up their girl in this absurd way, what can they expect? Still, May is our servant, faithful and trusty. And Frederick ought to be ashamed of himself. And I was thinking him so steady! sterling and upright as gold"

"There's a suspicion that he means to marry the girl."

Mr. Lyvett's face flushed red: his tone was haughty. "What are you saying, Rowley?"

"If I say it, sir, it is in the hope that it may be guarded against. I overheard Jones chaffing Mr. Fred about it a week back: they did not know I was there. Since then I have kept my eyes and ears open; have waited after hours and been here on Sundays; and I am sure Mr. Fred means mischief. Mischief for himself, not for her."

Mr. Lyvett sat back in his chair, a frown on his brow.

"Last night," continued old Rowley, "I just dined

hard by, and took a stroll down this street afterwards, to ascertain if I could see anything going on; and I did see. She came out, dressed in white, with chains and bracelets and things, and he handed her into a cab, hat off, as respectfully as could be, and got in afterwards. Old May fetched it from the stand at the top of the street. 'Opera, Haymarket,' Mr. Fred called out, and off they went."

"But with all this going on, Rowley—operas and cabs, and such things—you cannot pretend to think it is an innocent, platonic sort of affair," said Mr. Lyvett, his mouth curling with scorn.

"Innocent, sir, in one sense. I believe Mr. Fred's intentions to that girl are as honourable as ever yours were to Mrs. Lyvett. Had I thought it less serious, I don't know that I should have troubled you."

Mr. Lyvett sat and played with his watch seals, which he wore in the old-fashioned manner, hanging down from a heavy, straight chain.

"Fred was always the fool of the family," he angrily muttered: but at another time he would not have said it. "Well, we must see what can be done. Harsh measures, in these cases, seldom answer. I am much obliged to you, Rowley."

Harsh measures seldom do answer, and Mr. Lyvett was a better diplomatist. Within a day or two, it was known throughout the house that Mr. Frederick was

fixed upon to go to Valparaiso. Lyvett, Castlerosse, and Lyvett were the agents for an important house there, and some business had arisen which rendered it expedient that one of the firm should proceed there. This was actually the case, and Mr. Lyvett had been thinking of despatching his elder son.

Frederick Lyvett scarcely knew whether to be pleased or annoyed. When his father called him into his private room and blandly informed him that he and Mr. Castlerosse had come to the decision to despatch him on this important mission, he felt transfixed with wonder. Were there no Sophia May to intrude herself into his thoughts, he would have been gratified beyond measure. But a young man's desire for adventure overcame even his love: besides, he often heard Sophia sing the words "Absence makes the heart grow fonder," and believed it.

"You will have to be off to-morrow, Frederick."

"To-morrow!" repeated the startled young man.

"You must catch the outgoing mail-packet."

"But—but my traps, father? I must have an outfit."

"Oh, they are easily got together," said Mr. Lyvett. "You can do all that to-day."

And Frederick found it had to be so. He had barely time that night to wish his lady-love farewell and to vow to her eternal fidelity. Away he went in

high spirits; not a care or doubt on his mind as to the future.

His only remonstrance to his father had been in regard to his "traps," that there was not time enough to get them together. However the time was made to be sufficient; and he and his traps were escorted by Mr. Lyvett himself to the port of embarkation, and on to the good ship *The Skimmer of the South*, then making ready to put to sea. Fred never dreamt that he was sent away with a motive—that his father knew as much about his private affairs as he himself knew.

Sophia May was stunned by the blow. A suspicion of the truth—that something had been discovered—lay upon her; and she fully believed that she had seen Fred Lyvett for the last time. The thought was very bitter. She had no love for Frederick Lyvett; but she missed his pleasant companionship; and she found all her golden visions of rising in the world as his wife, suddenly flung to the winds. Yes, it was intensely bitter. Sophia sat down in her attic and shed many tears.

"What will become of me now? I *can't* live on in this wretched place! Why was I ever born?"

The next scene in the drama concerned Mr. and Mrs. May. On the return of Mr. Lyvett to London, they were ordered into the presence of himself and

Mr. Castlerosse. May and his wife stood like culprits. Mrs. May attired in her choice black gown that she wore for cleaning, and her rusty black cap.

Mr. Lyvett sternly informed them that the fact of their having inveigled his son into a clandestine intimacy with their daughter was now known to him, and that Mr. Frederick's voyage to Valparaiso was undertaken to break off the affair. Terribly confused and ashamed, they knew not what to say, and in their perplexity they gathered what Mr. Lyvett had not intended to imply, for he was a man of strict veracity—namely, that Mr. Frederick was a party to the scheme, and that it was he, in especial, who wished to go away to rid himself of Sophia. The porter did venture upon a defence, as well as his confusion would allow—that Mr. Frederick had not been "invaydled" at all; that he had took to come of his own accord, and said he *would* come, whether or no; and he, May, humbly hoped the gentlemen would condescend to pardon him and his wife for what wasn't no fault of theirn. Mr. Lyvett's pardoning consisted in handing May a certain amount of wages in lieu of notice, and ordering them all three to be out of the house by five o'clock that evening.

"I thought it was not all sure," sighed poor Mrs. May, when she descended to the kitchen dissolved in grief, "and I have told Sophiar so; and she has

snapped at me for saying it. If it had been anybody else but a young Lyvett, I might have had faith. When a gentleman, whose family keeps their carriages and footmen in silk stockings, comes to lower himself down to his own servants and sit with them in their kitchen amongst the dirty ashes, as it were, from the upstairs fires, it's not to be expected but what he *will* take himself away. He admired Sophiar, as was easy to be seen, and I'm sure he was a well- meaning honourable gentleman without a ill thought; and that was all. And I declare I don't know which is the most to blame, him or us."

"Don't you ever try it on again Sophiar," gruffly interrupted the father.

She was sitting with a pale cheek and dry lips, leaning her elbow on the round table, indulging her resentment against Frederick Lyvett. In the face of evidence she could not doubt the truth of what she heard; she fully believed he had gone away to break with her; she believed that his protestations of love were false: that he had been only laughing at her in his sleeve the whole time. Or, at any rate, if that was not the case, for she remembered how earnest and guileless he had seemed, that he had yielded to the remonstrances of his father, and given her up.

"This is not packing up," suddenly interposed May.

"*I* can't pack up," returned Mrs. May, "I am too

much shook. Whatever is to be done with the pianer?"

"They must fetch it away, wife. There ain't nothing else to be done with it."

"Oh," groaned Mrs. May, "I wish I was dead!"

"Much use it is, wishing that," said the porter. "I'd recommend you to turn and pack up instead. If the things bain't in the cart by five o'clock, we shall have 'em thrown in for us. I know our master; he sticks to his word when he's roused. You'd better begin with them pots and pans. They can go in that empty case."

Mrs. May dried her eyes, and slowly rose. "Come, Sophiar," she said, "you must lend a helping hand to-day."

"I!" returned Sophia, sobbing out her contempt, "*I* lend a helping hand with pots and pans! You couldn't expect me to do it, mother. I will pack my own things: and glad enough I shall be to do it, and be away from this place; but I can't touch kettles and saucepans. I've never done any hard work in all my life; you know I have not."

Mrs. May sighed. True: Sophia had been taught to exercise her fingers on the piano, not on domestic work.

"Perhaps you could put my clothes up as well as yours, child," she ventured to say. "I'm sure I don't

know how in the world we shall get through all, and be away by five."

Sophia sailed out of the kitchen, making no answer. The porter departed to secure two rooms, which, as he chanced to know, were to let in the neighbourhood, and to bring in help to get away their goods in time. Later in the day, when they were engaged in the attics taking down the bedsteads, and Sophia was in the kitchen alone, some one dashed in at the door. It was Mr. Jones, whom we once saw just after he was articled—and Sophia too. His articles were done with now, but he remained in the office at a good salary, hoping a vague hope that he might sometime see on the doorposts "Lyvett, Castlerosse, Lyvett, and Jones." Mr. Jones had good private expectations, and his family and the Lyvetts were on friendly terms.

"My *dear* Miss May! I have so longed for a little conversation with you; and now that puppy Fred Lyvett's out of the way, I hope my turn has come."

"What?" said Sophia, turning on him no pleasant expression.

"I admire you immensely, my dear Miss May, and——"

"Then take that," answered Sophia, dashing over him the contents of a wooden bowl; an apparent compound of grease and damp coffee-grounds.

Young Mr. Jones stepped back amidst the débris of the kitchen furniture, now preparing for its removal. Considerably more crest-fallen than he ever remembered to have been, he retreated up the stairs, wondering how on earth he should get his hat out of the office, and hide his shirt-front from the clerks. At the turn of the landing he met Mrs. May, who was carrying down some bed-posts.

"Sakes alive, sir!" she uttered in astonishment. "Whatever is the matter? I never saw anybody in such a pickle in my life."

"You may well ask what it is, Dame May!" spluttered Mr. Jones. "It is the work of your daughter. I addressed a polite word to her as civilly as I could speak it, and she flung this poison over me—or whatever it is. It's well for the house that it's going to have a clearance: you are all a queer lot."

"What did you do that for, Sophiar?" demanded Mrs. May, when she reached the kitchen.

"Do what?"

"That to Mr. Jones."

"Because I pleased to do it."

"Whatever shall we do with you if you are to behave like this?" cried poor Mrs. May. "Your temper is upset to-day, Sophiar."

"I have had enough to upset it," replied Sophia. "But I will not trouble you long, mother. I have

been thinking of matters, and my mind is made up. Your home and father's will never be any fit home for me, so I must leave it and go out in the world."

"As lady's-maid?" briefly responded Mrs. May.

"No. As governess."

"As governess!" repeated the mother, the word appearing to take her breath away. "Well, Sophiar, if I don't believe you have just hit it," she added, after a pause of consideration. "There's many a respectable tradesman's family would be proud of you to help edicate their girls"

"Very likely," remarked Sophia. "But I should not enter a tradesman's family."

"Why, what then?"

"A nobleman's. Or a gentleman's."

Mrs. May was petrified. Her scared senses only allowed her to take in the first word.

"A nobleman's family, child!—what, a lord's?"

"Why not?" coolly asked Sophia.

"Oh, but don't you see," spoke Mrs. May, "how things would be against it? *You* can never get admittance to a lord's family as governess, Sophiar. They want real ladies for governesses, lords do: leastways, those that have had different beginnings from ours. Why, when the nobleman came for what they call references, and found us what we are, me and your father living in a kitchen, and all that, no

lord would think you good enough to teach his children."

Sophia's life was rather a mortified life just then. She recognized the doubt at least as forcibly as her mother.

"We should never have wanted you to go out at all, child, never; not as lady's-maid, or anything; only your Aunt Foxaby got thinking afore you came homo that you'd not like to live in these kitchens, brought up so superior. But if you *could* reconcile yourself to stay with us, Sophiar, why, you'd just be the comfort of me and of your father. We've got but you."

"Now, mother, could you expect it?"

Mrs. May sighed. Had they been making a mistako all along?

"There seems to be only one course open to me," observed Sophia; "that of going out as governess. It shall be in a high family, or not at all."

"It can never be a lord's, child, I'm afraid."

"You will see," returned Sophia.

And so shall we.

CHAPTER IV.

AT PARKWATER.

THE beams of a September sun, drawing near its setting, were falling on a mansion belonging to a well-cultivated estate in one of the better parts of Ireland. The house was not erected in a pure style of architecture, for it was a straggling, in-and-out sort of building, that seemed to have been added to indiscriminately at different times, a room here, a room there; but the scenery around was beautiful. It was called Parkwater. At the window of one of the reception-rooms, gazing at an approaching car, stood a pretty, quiet-looking lady, unassuming in face as in dress. She appeared a simple-hearted, cordial woman, quite devoid of pretence and affectation; and such she was. It was Lady Tennygal.

She had dined in the middle of the day with her children. She was devoted to them; and when her lord was absent, she was apt to forget pomp and state. Lady Tennygal was expecting the arrival of the new

governess to her little girls, and had hospitably thought she would wait tea for her: no doubt this car contained the lady. The countess rang the bell.

"Reed, show that lady in to me at once. I think it is the governess."

"Yes, my lady."

A minute or two, and the same man threw the door open for the governess. A tall, fair girl with a handsome face. The countenance had, however, a peculiar expression; very determined, and not always pleasing.

"Miss May, my lady."

Miss May came forward, her head erect, and her air consequential. One might have deemed, indeed, that she was the lady and the other the governess. She dropped a ceremonious curtsy, very low, just as you may have seen from a Frenchwoman.

"Have I the honour of addressing Lady Tennygal?"

The countess inclined her head. "An uncompromising-looking young woman," she thought to herself, "but that's all proper, I suppose, for a governess. Allow me to welcome you to Parkwater, Miss May," she said aloud. "I hope you will find your residence here agreeable."

"Madam, I thank you for your kind wishes. I trust I shall perform my duties to your satisfaction."

"And when you have taken off your things, which I dare say you are anxious to do, we will have tea,"

said the pleasant little countess, "and you shall see your pupils. I thought we would take tea together this evening, that we might grow acquainted with each other. I have the children very much with me when Lord Tennygal is absent."

Miss May was shown to her rooms. When she returned from them she was rather finer than the countess—taking in the general effect of her appearance; and her flaxen hair was dressed in elaborate braids. "Too *pretentious* for a governess," was the idea that crossed Lady Tennygal's mind; "I wonder whether she is quite a gentlewoman?" The next moment she took herself to task; as she was sure to do if her kind heart gave a momentary vent to an ill-natured thought.

"Here are your two little girls, Miss May; Lady Laura and Lady Rose. My dear children, I am sure you will welcome your governess, and tell her you are glad to see her."

They advanced and put out their hands: pretty children of nine and ten, very well-behaved.

"Mais elles ne sont pas—" began Miss May, and then pulled herself up hastily. "I beg your ladyship's pardon; I have been so much accustomed to converse in French, that I occasionally run into it when I ought not to do so. I was about to ask if these two young ladies were all."

"All!" laughed the countess, "all the children! There are six more, younger than they are. The last is only three months old—such a little darling! These are all who will be under your care at present. I hope you will bring them on well."

"Papa says we are backward," interrupted Laura.

"Oh yes. Lord Tennygal is very clever himself, and he thinks the children ought to be so. I tell him there's quite time enough."

"He has been away ever so long, papa has," cried little Rose.

"Nearly nine weeks," added the communicative countess to Miss May. "He has been out yachting with some friends in the Mediterranean. But he is in Dublin now, and will be home in a day or two."

"Uncle Tody is coming with him," said Lady Rose, "and he is going to bring me a real live Venetian doll in a gondola. He said so."

"I have not yet inquired what sort of a journey you have had, Miss May," said the countess. "Was the sea rough?"

Before Miss May could answer, the sound of a carriage was heard, and the children left their tea and ran to the window to look at it.

"Mamma!" screamed the children in delight, "it is papa!"

"Never!" cried the countess, running also to look. "Oh, how glad I am! That's just like him, Miss May; he loves to take us by surprise."

The Earl of Tennygal came in. A small, fair man, as good-natured as his wife. She met him in the doorway, received his embrace, and then flew upstairs to carry down the baby herself, and tell the other children that papa was come. Miss May had risen, and the earl bowed to her, wondering what visitor his wife had staying with her.

"Now who is going to be mistress of the ceremonies and introduce me?" said he to the little girls, as he stood before the stranger, with a genial smile. "Mamma seems to have flown away."

"She came this evening; she is our new governess."

"Hush, Rose," cried the more dignified Laura. "Papa, it is Miss May."

Rose thought that quite enough. She pulled his arm to draw his attention. "Papa, why did not Uncle Tody come?"

"Uncle Tody is gone to London, Rose."

"And taken my doll and gondola with him?" Rose seemed to think much of this "Uncle Tody."

"That lady in the drawing-room took me by surprise, Bessie," remarked the earl to his wife, as they strolled out together after tea. "Rose gave me the information that she was a 'new governess.'"

"So she is. I sent you word that I had engaged one when I wrote to—where was it?—Sicily."

"Did you? I do not remember it."

"Yes, I did. Do you think she looks as if she would suit?"

"Dear Bessie, that's one of your fallacies—judging by 'looks.' Did you engage this one for her looks?"

"I never saw her until this evening. Why?" added the countess, with quick apprehension. "Do you not like her looks?"

"Oh, her looks are well enough: if her capabilities equal them, she'll do. She does not think a little of herself, I can see that. Where did you get her from?"

"I wrote to London, to Lady Langton. She heard of her through an agency, I think. I left it all to Lady Langton. Miss May's style of playing is good, I am told, and her French that of a native."

"Um!" said the earl. "What of her English?"

"Oh, Frank! you speak as if you did not think well of it."

"I fancy her tone—her accent, perhaps I should rather say—is not quite as pure and perfect as it might be. It does not give one the idea that she has mixed in good society."

Now Lady Tennygal could not convince herself that she had not noticed the same. But she had entire

faith in Lady Langton. "Perhaps we may be mistaken, Frank dear," she said. "I do so hope she will suit us."

"So do I, I am sure," assented the good-natured earl. "Is she a gentlewoman, Bessie?"

"Oh yes."

"Who are her friends?"

"Solicitors; eminent solicitors. That is, her father was. He is dead, I think. I will find Lady Langton's letters for you. I know my letter to Miss May, the one I wrote to ratify the agreement, was addressed to the care of Lyvett, Castlerosse and Lyvett; a first-rate legal firm of long standing, Lady Langton says, and they strongly recommended her."

"Lyvett, Castlerosse and Lyvett!" repeated the earl. "I know the firm well by reputation. most honourable practitioners If they answer for Miss May, it is all right. Do you give her a heavy salary, Bessie?"

"Oh no; very reasonable indeed. Only forty pounds. But she is young, and has not been out before. I think she will suit, Frank: but of course there's no telling without a trial. So Theodore has not come with you?"

"He will be here, I expect, in a few days. He was obliged to go on to London to see about one or two matters there; *pressing* ones, Bessie. Tody has been

at the old game again. I don't wonder your father is sick and tired of paying his debts for him."

"Poor fellow! He is so good-natured."

"Not much of that. He is reckless-natured, if you like. To squander away his money, and leave his just debts unpaid, is not being what I call good-natured. From London, Tody goes down to see Sir Archibald: but as to his getting from him what he wants, I am sure he won't; and Tody knows it."

"Papa said, the last time, that he would never set him straight again," observed Lady Tennygal.

"The fact is, Bessie, he has said it so frequently, and had to say it so frequently, that it falls on Tody's ears unheeded. But he had a sharp, determined letter from Sir Archibald the day before he left the yacht."

"Oh, did he? What did papa say in it?"

"It was to the effect that he would advance no more money; and if Tody went to prison, there he might stop. Tody had been writing to Sir Archibald that he was in imminent danger of arrest."

"What will he do? How I wish we were rich!"

"If we were as rich as the Indies, and could hand Tody a blank cheque to be filled up at will, it would be doing him no kindness, for he is only pulled out of one scrape to walk into another. It will take two thousand pounds now to set him only tolerably clear."

"Oh, Frank! Do you know how he is going to manage?"

"I know what he says: but if Tody says one thing to-day, he says another to-morrow. He means, in the first place, to have a rake at Sir Archibald—that is not my expression, Bessie; it is his—and free himself from one or two things that he *must* be freed from. So much, perhaps, Sir Archibald will do; for they are very bad."

"What are they?" hastily inquired Lady Tennygal.

"My dear, I cannot explain them to you; you would not understand them. Tody is in a mess; and that's all you need trouble yourself to know."

"What has it to do with?—this that is so bad?"

"Oh, it has to do with bills. Never you mind. He has been in a mess before, and he will be in one again, or it would not be Tody Devereux. Sir Archibald, no doubt, will help him out of *that*, but no further. And then Tody proposes to come over here, and lie *perdu* with us, whilst he considers how he is to get on his legs again."

"I have always thought it a pity he sold out."

"He could not keep in—he would have been sent to Coventry. You know it was not once, or twice, or three times, that Tody was in for it, but always. And some things got to the colonel's ears—if they did not get to the commander-in-chief's—and altogether

there was no other resource. Besides, he was compelled to turn the proceeds into money, and make stop-gaps of it."

"Still, if he could have kept his commission——"

"But he could not," interrupted Lord Tennygal. "My dear Bessie, Tody is your brother, and I am sorry to speak harshly of him, but he is just a vagabond, and that's the best that can be said."

A few days passed on. Miss May set to her duties with a will. How she had contrived to enter this family was best known to herself; but, being in it, she resolved to try and please. The departure of Frederick Lyvett lay on her still as a bitter blow, a terrible check to the ambitious views she had begun to cherish. However, she told herself, if she could only continue in these families, she might meet with some one as eligible as he who would fall in love with her and raise her by marriage to his own rank.

The little girls, Laura and Rose, took to her very kindly; Lady Tennygal was charmed with her playing and singing; and all parties were satisfied. Miss May perhaps would have been better satisfied had Parkwater been more lively. It might have been a desert, for all the company she saw; and she could not understand a lord and a lady living so quietly in regard to household arrangements.

On the first Sunday, as they were walking home

across the park after morning service, Lord Tennygal suddenly addressed his wife.

"Is that governess of yours an Englishwoman, Bessie?"

"Certainly. Why?"

"Because she uses a French prayer-book in church."

"No!" uttered Lady Tennygal, in an accent of disbelief.

"She used one this morning. I saw it in her hand. And——"

"Mamma!" cried little Rose, running up, her whole air, eyes, and lips, one picture of admiring awe—"mamma, only think! Miss May's book is not a common book like ours: it is all in French; every bit. How I wish I was clever enough to have a French prayer-book!"

"That's corroborative testimony," laughed Lord Tennygal. "I don't know how you will get over the dilemma," he added to his wife, in an under and more serious tone. "It is a pity the children observed it. You cannot well speak against their governess to them: but you cannot allow their minds to retain the favourable impression that French prayer-book seems to have made."

The kind face of Lady Tennygal wore a vexed expression.

"How could Miss May show so much bad taste?"

"I don't think 'taste' is quite the right word," remarked Lord Tennygal. "Mark me, Bessie, this proves that the young lady's mind has not been altogether well trained: I doubt whether her talents have either. No one ever took a French prayer-book to our service but from one motive—display. And a well-educated woman knows that she has no need of that. I should say Miss May is much more superficially acquainted with French than you suspect, or she would not endeavour to parade it"

At this moment they turned an angle of the walk, and came face to face with a gentleman—a tall, dark man, with a profusion of black hair and whiskers, black eyes that seemed to pierce you in a disagreeable manner, and a too free, but at the same time an ill-tempered, cast of countenance. Some people would have shrunk from him instinctively—some might have called him handsome. He was undoubtedly a fine man as to figure, towering a head and shoulders above Lord Tennygal. It was Captain Devereux, brother to Lady Tennygal, but several years older; and no two faces, and no two individuals, could be much less alike.

"Theodore!" uttered Lady Tennygal, in an accent of surprise, as she held out her hand.

"What! have you arrived?" exclaimed the earl. "How well you kept your promise of writing!"

"Aw—I had nothing good to write," said the new-comer, speaking in a very affected and untrue tone of voice. "I arrived here two hours ago, and saw you all filing off to church. What a thundering long sermon you must have had inflicted on you! I wonder you could sit it out!"

"Do not forget our old bargain, Theodore," hastily interrupted Lady Tennygal. "No irreverent speaking before the children. They are coming up to us. I wish you would break yourself of the habit."

"Oh, it's Uncle Tody!" exclaimed Rose, running to him. "Uncle Tody, where's my live doll?"

"She died on the voyage."

"It's not true," said Rose.

"It is. She was sea-sick."

The child looked very unconvinced. She spoke again:

"Then, where's the gondola?"

"Oh, that has sailed away."

Lady Rose turned away in supreme indignation.

"Mamma did you ever know Uncle Tody bring us anything that he promised? It is always the same."

"Uncle Tody" was no longer attending to Rose: his notice was given to the handsome girl who was walking with Laura. She wore a lilac silk dress and a showy shawl; and he thought, as Lord Tennygal

had first done, that it was a visitor. Having a propensity for admiring all the handsome girls that came in his way, Captain Devereux lifted his hat. Strictly speaking, he was no longer Captain Devereux, as he had sold out; but habit accorded him the title. Lord Tennygal linked his arm within his brother-in-law's, and drew him on.

"Stop a bit, Tennygal. Who's that?"

"No one that need concern you—the governess. How have you managed, over yonder?"

"I have not managed at all," was the reply, accompanied by an oath. In those days swearing was thought fashionable, and Captain Devereux kept the fashion up.

"Not managed at all? I suppose you mean with your father?"

"The old man stands out; he won't advance a stiver. I think he would have done something, but my temper got up, and we came to hard words."

"Your temper often gets up when it ought to keep down," remarked Lord Tennygal. "Well?"

"There was nothing left for me but to make my escape. And by Jove! I can't feel sure, Tennygal, that I shall not be followed. Once let the confounded foxes get the scent here, and I'm done for."

"And what, I ask, do you mean to do?"

"I have been turning it over in my mind, and I

think a good plan would be, for you to write to the old man——"

"I will not interfere between you and Sir Archibald," interrupted the earl.

"You won't?"

"I won't. I have no right to do so, and it might make it unpleasant for Bessie."

"Then Bessie shall. He'll listen to her, as he would to you. But he won't to me."

"Bessie must do as she thinks best. I will not control her. But were she of my opinion, she would remain neuter."

"What the plague am I to do?" was the angry rejoinder. "These confounded matters must be settled, and with speed too; you know that. Why should you put the stopper on Bessie's trying to win over Sir Archibald?"

"I don't put it on. I said I would not control her. But these things are not of a nature that you can explain to my wife: and how else can she do you good with Sir Archibald?"

"Of course I am not going to give the details to her."

"But they must be given to Sir Archibald. It is only the dire necessity that will induce him to listen at all."

"You ought to help me with him, Tennygal," was the grumbling rejoinder.

"Nonsense, man! Write a proper statement to Sir Archibald yourself—properly worded, I mean, and apologising for your temper—and crave his assistance, so far as that you cannot do without it. That's the best thing to do. We will talk it over to-morrow. And, look here—don't call him the 'old man' to Bessie. She does not like it. It savours of disrespect; and your father is not old yet. Come in now, Devereux, and take some luncheon."

Rose still harped upon her wrongs, enlightening the governess as to the ever non-fulfilment of the promises as to dolls and gondolas.

"Don't you think it is a great shame of Uncle Tody, Miss May?"

"Perhaps it was not his fault," suggested the governess. "What is your uncle's name?"

"Why, it's Uncle Tody."

"But his other name?"

"Captain Devereux," said Laura. "He is mamma's brother."

"He is not a real captain now, you know, because he has no men to command," interposed Rosa. "Grandpapa was so angry with him."

"Who is your grandpapa, Lady Laura?" inquired the governess.

"Sir Archibald Devereux. He is one of the Queen's officers of State, and he makes laws."

With the last piece of information the children were called to be made ready for their dinner, which they took at the luncheon-table. Miss May did not exchange a word with Captain Devereux, but he glanced at her often with his black eyes. Afterwards, when she was alone in her sitting-room, she unlocked her desk and took out a French book. Sophia did well to keep it, and all such books, locked up: it would have astonished Lady Tennygal had she seen them at Parkwater. The governess appeared, however, to derive amusement from it, for she sat reading it till the bells rang out for afternoon service.

"Those droning bells again!" was her grumbling ejaculation. "Of course I shall be expected to attend —and not a creature to look at one except parish rustics! Had I known this was such a wretched, out-of-the-world neighbourhood, I might not have been so eager to come to it."

Miss May was right: she was expected to attend. But she appeared with an English prayer-book, the gift of Lady Tennygal: who, in presenting it, had made a special request that the French one might be put away out of sight, and never be taken to church at Parkwater again. Sophia wished the church at Hanover, or as much farther off as it could be induced to go. She foresaw, indeed, that she should lead a dull life of it at Parkwater. Sober routine was not

congenial to her, she feared. As to this gentleman, Captain Devereux, who had enlivened their dulness to-day, she supposed he had only come on a very temporary visit, and that the probability was she should not exchange a word with him whilst he stayed. But she would have liked to do so well enough. He struck her as being quite a noble-looking man, especially by the side of that shrimp, Lord Tennygal: and she, at least, did not see anything to dislike in his manners or expression. I said before that some people did not do so: rather the contrary: and Miss May was one of them.

CHAPTER V.

CAPTAIN DEVEREUX.

THERE were signs one evening of a reception at Parkwater. Rooms were lighted, and carriages whirled up, bringing guests. Not many guests, for the locality did not produce them, and they for the most part had to come from a distance. Still, when all were assembled, what with old and young, it was a goodly show. Rose was nine years old that day, and they were keeping her birthday: children and parents were equally welcome.

The governess's eyes and senses were dazzled. On this occasion she made one with the rest. Inordinately alive to the value of rank, to the pomp and pride of courtly life, the result chiefly of her childhood's researches in the Caterpillar romances, her expectations had been raised to an extraordinary pitch when about to enter the Earl of Tennygal's family. Once there, she had found herself immeasurably disappointed. In all, excepting the titles, it might have

been taken for a private gentleman's household. Miss May had anticipated something far more grand; though precisely what, she could not herself have stated; whether the carpets were to be of cloth of gold, or the every-day dinner-plates of silver. But, on certain occasions, none knew better how to hold their rank, and to display its appurtenances, than Lord and Lady Tennygal: this was one of them; and Sophia May, who had never before witnessed the social unions of courtly life, forgot that she was only a subordinate, and thought herself in the seventh heaven. She was standing looking at the quadrille in the children's room, when Captain Devereux approached her.

"Where is it that you hide yourself, Miss May?" he demanded, his voice drowned by the music. "I have been in this house going on for three weeks, and have hardly met with you as many times. It would have been like three months had you not been in it."

The blush of gratified vanity rose to Sophia May's face. Captain Devereux, brother to a countess, and son to the Right Honourable Sir Archibald Devereux, her Majesty's Home Secretary, bore to her mind an exalted charm. And besides that, in the very few meetings they had held, she had felt herself irresistibly attracted to him. Her heart had already learned to

flutter for him as it had never fluttered for Frederick Lyvett.

During this stay of Captain Devereux, the children were more in their own apartments, except on Sundays they did not dine at the luncheon-table. He was so loose in his ideas, and sometimes also in his expressions, that Lord and Lady Tennygal kept their little girls out of his society as much as they could. As a matter of course this also kept the governess from it. But they had met oftener than "three times:" that was, so to say, a figure of speech.

"What do you suppose makes me linger here, in this remote boghole of a sister-kingdom, and in this precious house of it, ever in an uproar with children?" continued the captain.

"I do not know," answered Miss May, blushing deeper and deeper.

Captain Devereux thought he had never seen a more lovely face than that one with the blush upon it, and his eyes said it so plainly that the governess cast hers down.

"Then you ought to know. It is *you*. And if you had only listened to what I said the other day, instead of darting away, you would have known it then." He spoke in that insinuating tone which none knew how to assume better than Theodore Devereux. It

had won its way to many a more experienced head and heart than poor Sophia May's.

"I am sorry if you thought me rude," she replied. "Lady Rose was with me, and she is——"

"A quick genius," he interrupted, "and might carry tales. Was that what you were about to say? Quickness runs in the Devereux family. I am wanted in Scotland, where I made an engagement to go shooting; I am wanted at Sir Archibald's; I am wanted in fifty places; and I cannot tear myself away from the spot. You alone are keeping me here."

Captain Devereux knew that he had never told a greater untruth in his life; and he knew, also, that if he could have got away, Miss May and her charms, ten times magnified, would not have kept him for a single moment. He went on improving upon his assertion; Sophia's heart fluttering more and more with every word, and believing it religiously.

"And I am a fool for my pains: for I cannot afford yet to take a Mrs. Devereux. What's the matter?"

She had turned aside and appeared to be busy, tying the sash of a little girl. Captain Devereux looked round, and saw Lady Tennygal; who was beckoning to him from the door of the room.

"I have been searching for you," she began. "You must ask Harriet Ord for the next quadrille. You have neglected her all the evening."

"Harriet Ord's a scarecrow.'

"It is a pity you think so, Theodore," was the answer "I believe, if you chose to ask her, you might have her for your wife to-morrow. I am sure she likes you. And she is so amiable, and—— "

"Oh, I knew long ago I might have her for the asking," carelessly replied Captain Devereux, "but I shall not try *that* on till everything else has failed. When I am so deep in the well that I can sink no lower, I may go to her and her eighty thousand pounds to draw me up."

"Theodore, how can you speak so?" asked his sister, indignantly. "Is she worth no more to you than that?"

"Not at present," was the cool rejoinder. "As to her amiability—cela va sans dire. It's the best part about her."

"Well, come and dance with her now."

Captain Devereux followed his sister, with a wry face: but, once in the society of Lady Harriet Ord, he became all smiling attention. Slightingly as he had spoken of her to the countess, there was in his heart a latent conviction that he should some time be thankful to win her and her coveted money, and he would not mar his chance. In earlier days, years ago now, they had been thrown a good deal together. Captain Devereux put forth some of his blandish-

ments, just to pass the time away, and had gained her heart. He knew he gained it—and then, like the knight in the once popular song, he rode away. Lady Harriet was not handsome; in fact, she was rather remarkably plain; but she was sweet-tempered and of sterling worth. Heaven help her, said the world, if she linked herself to that Theodore Devereux! Lord Tennygal said it: but Bessie, blinded by sisterly affection, thought it would be all that was wanted to reform her brother. She only knew of a few of his lighter failings.

"I have something of importance to say to you," spoke Captain Devereux, seeking out Sophia when he quitted Lady Harriet. "Can you contrive to give me a few minutes' interview to-morrow?—or on any subsequent day?"

"Were it anything very particular," she began, with her blue eyes unconsciously cast down—"but still, it could not be. I do not see that it could. I am in the schoolroom all day, and the young ladies are with me."

"Provoking little reptiles!" he ejaculated. "Do you never go out, Miss May?"

"Not often, without them."

"Well, I must see you. Look here: the day after to-morrow will be Sunday. You can stay at home from church."

"But I—I shall have no plea for staying at home, Captain Devereux," she urged. "What would Lady Tennygal think?"

"Let her think what she likes. I suppose you have a headache sometimes? You can have one then. No doubt you *will* have one, after this dissipation."

Strange to say, on the following Sunday, Miss May's head did ache. It was so painful as to preclude her going out; and an intimation to that effect was conveyed to the sympathizing Lady Tennygal, who carried her some aromatic vinegar with her own hands.

When the family were departing for church, the countess knocked at the door of her brother's apartments, which were on the same floor as her own. "Theodore," she called out, "do come to church with us for once."

"Much obliged for the invitation," he answered, from within. "I shan't be up till you are back again. You and Tennygal can pray for me, you know." Yet Captain Devereux was up and dressed then; and his sister, with a sigh at his mocking tone, joined her husband and children.

Surely Sophia May's better angel was away that day! Otherwise she never would have consented to the clandestine interview. It was sufficiently harmless in itself; but it laid the foundation for much

deception, that was destined in time to bring forth terrible fruit.

She sat in her sitting-room, Lady Tennygal's vinaigrette on the table by her side, and her handkerchief saturated with eau-de-cologne in her hand. Captain Devereux stood by the open window, listening to her complaints of the pain her head gave her, and speculating within himself upon whether it ached or not.

After all, he wanted nothing particular. Nothing but to pass an idle hour with her, and assure her that he cared for no one but her: that he never had cared for any one else in the world. The hour passed very quickly. From his post at the window he soon saw Lord and Lady Tennygal approaching in the distance, on their way from church, with their children and servants. Captain Devereux tore himself away from Miss May's fascinating presence, as he styled it, and withdrew to his own room, lingering yet a moment to reiterate his affection for her, and to assert that, now it had set in, it would last for ever.

Sophia believed him all too readily. "He sighed, he vowed, and she believed him," runs the old song, or to that effect. But the same old song says, "When men flatter, sigh, and languish, think them false—I found them so."

Sophia listened, and believed; her heart beating,

her pulses thrilling: her whole being filled with one intense passionate love for Theodore Devereux. For that day, at least, she was sure of seeing him again, for they would presently meet at the dining-room luncheon; and the bliss the thought brought to her was unspeakable. After to-day—well, Captain Devereux had told her that she must contrive to meet him, or else he should die: he would snatch a convenient moment to wait upon her in the school-room, and she must take a run in the grounds occasionally without those little brats. Sophia tacitly acquiesced. She had no thought of harm in doing so, or that harm would come of it. The only thing presenting itself to her mind, was the necessity of concealing it from the knowledge of Lord and Lady Tennygal. They would be sure not to approve of it.

And so, with her eyes open, Sophia May entered voluntarily on a course of deception, and met Captain Devereux when circumstances permitted. It was a very innocent beginning—as *she* looked upon it; but it was destined to lead to a most sad and distressing ending, of which the world would hear. And in the depth of her later despair, she could not recall one single point of self-excuse or consolation, for she saw it was but her own self-sophistry that had misled her, and her misplaced faith in Captain Devereux. At present all seemed pleasant and easy and innocent;

these first links of the chain were so light and specious —they generally are so—that she felt them not; or dreamed that it would coil and coil gradually around her until its later links became as desperate weights of iron, that would crush her to death, or worse than death, in their folds.

It is not a grateful task to record these histories; and this—it has been already said—is a true one; to trace out, or even to touch upon, a story of folly and sin and crime. Sophia May met her evil genius when she met Captain Devereux. Whether she was much or little to blame, comparatively speaking, in these earlier stages of the affair when they were at Parkwater, can never be known. She declared later that she had been entirely and craftily deceived: but whether she was less deceived than she wished to make it appear, might be a nice question. At all events, it was one left undecided.

At the best, the tale was but the old tale: one that had been enacted over and over again, and will be until time shall cease. A false man and a credulous woman: a wedding promised for "to-morrow," and the morrow never came. It is well, oh reader, to tell these stories in the twilight, when the atmosphere is dim, and the voice is lowered to a whisper, and the faces opposite to ours are imperfectly seen. The world teems with such histories; and though we may profess

to ignore them, and shut our eyes to them, there they are nevertheless: and perhaps it is best that some one of them more notable than the rest in its sorrow, or disastrous in its results, may from time to time be recorded, if only in the light of a warning.

But in the twilight; in the twilight.

CHAPTER VI.

SUSPICION.

THE weeks and the months went on. Captain Devereux was still an inmate of Parkwater. He could not get away from it. No slave ever longed for emancipation more intensely than he longed to escape and be in the world again; but he dared not venture to go. Sir Archibald Devereux remained obdurate: one or two dangerous liabilities he did settle; but he would do no more for his hopeful son.

That Miss May's education was superficial, and her cultivation utterly unsuited to the charge she had undertaken, would, it is probable, have been long ago discovered, but that chance removed from her the supervision of Lady Tennygal.

An illness that proved to be a lingering one attacked Lady Tennygal late in the autumn, and confined her for some months to her room. Not until February did she begin to get about again. All this time had Captain Devereux been a fixture in the house, keeping

his locality quiet from his creditors, yawning through the dull, dark days, and bemoaning his hard fate at being condemned to vegetate in Ireland; where no diversion of any kind was to be had, excepting that arising from his snatched conversations with the governess. And of those conversations he had grown tired now, sick to death.

Once in a way he would ride over to Mrs. Barry's, the aunt of Lady Harriet Ord. Her place was some ten miles distant There he would spend a few hours in her company and Lady Harriet's, suppressing his weariness as he best could. But when the winter had given place to the early days of spring; when the hedges were beginning to shoot forth their green, and the glad birds to sing, Captain Devereux resolved on a desperate step; for indeed it did seem to him that without aid from some source he should be condemned to this frightful state of existence all his days.

"I have done it at last," he gloomily said one morning at breakfast, soon after his sister appeared amongst them again.

"What have you done?" inquired Lord Tennygal.

"Gone and sold myself—bones, body, and flesh—to Harriet Ord."

"You don't mean that you are going to marry her?" exclaimed the countess.

"It's nothing less," said Captain Devereux. "I

could not go on in this mummying way any longer: and one might as well be an embalmed mummy as have one's legs and wings tied as mine have been lately. I should have hung myself, or something equivalent, had it lasted another month. So yesterday, when I was over there, I told her she might take me if she liked; and she snapped at it."

"It is the very best thing you ever did," said Lord Tennygal, warmly. "If you choose, you may now become a decent member of society; Harriet will make you one."

"She ought to make me something—sacrificing myself for her!"

"Where is the sacrifice?"

"Sacrifice! She's forty."

"Nonsense! You are six-and-thirty, Tody."

"If you look to the peerage, you will see that Harriet is eight-and-thirty," interposed Lady Tennygal. "Two years are not so great a difference, my fastidious brother."

"Yes, they are, when they're on the wrong side. Besides, look at her Chinese eyes and African mouth?"

"For shame, Theodore!" interposed his sister warmly. "She has neither the one nor the other."

"*Can* you call her a beauty?"

"You are no Adonis, Tod," laughed the earl.

"What has that to do with it?" was the ex-captain's

growling answer. "The uglier a man is, the more the women like him."

"Theodore," said his sister gravely, "you have been behaving ill to Harriet Ord for this many a year past, unless you have all along intended to marry her. You have paid her attention. you have kept, I am certain, other suitors away from her: this is the only fitting termination, and, for yourself, it is a most fortunate one. Were I you, I should make the best of it instead of the worst."

"And a very good 'best' you may make of it," added the earl. "If Lady Harriet has not beauty, she has money and good temper: somebody whom I know is deficient in both."

"It is to be hoped her temper is good," snapped Captain Devereux. "She will find it put to the test."

Lord Tennygal glanced at him, a keen glance, and spoke in a serious tone.

"Devereux, mark me: when a man marries, he had better resolve not to try his wife's temper, for his own sake as well as for hers. If you cannot bring yourself to endeavour to make Harriet happy, it is your duty not to marry her."

"What a row about nothing!" answered Captain Devereux, as he rose from the breakfast-table. "I am not going to beat her."

Lord Tennygal drew in his lips. But for his wife's presence he would have spoken out his indignation.

"By the way," said Captain Devereux, halting with the door-handle in his hand. "Be so good as to keep what I have told you to yourselves. It is not to be announced yet. There are reasons against it."

"Your debts, I suppose," replied his sister.

"So just keep it dark, both of you," concluded the captain, not giving her a direct answer.

On the following day, the earl departed from Parkwater. Business called him to London. His wife and family would remain where they were until Easter, when he was to return for them.

And thus a short time again passed on; Captain Devereux paying visits to Mrs. Barry's two or three times a-week, by way of courting Lady Harriet.

It wanted about a fortnight to Easter when there stood one day, in a somewhat remote part of the park, a lady and gentleman in conversation so earnest, that the approach of a carriage across the greensward was unnoticed. As it came upon them, however, the gentleman started, and took off his hat in some confusion. The lady walked away.

The carriage contained Harriet Ord and Mrs. Barry. Mrs. Barry only had noticed the talkers. "That looked like the governess," was her thought; but she

said nothing. "How earnestly she was talking with Captain Devereux!—and how pale she looked!"

Captain Devereux, on his part, gazed with amazement after the carriage; for it not only bore the ladies, but some luggage also, as if they had come to make a stay.

"She has never been asking *them!*" was his muttered exclamation, as he hastened to the house.

The ladies, he heard, were in their dressing-rooms: he supposed Lady Tennygal might be in hers. There he found her, with her two eldest children.

"What are Harriet Ord and her aunt here to-day for?" he asked.

"Ah!" said the countess, clapping her hands, "I knew I should give you a surprise. I begged Harriet not to tell you. I have invited them to stay with us until we leave for London."

"You have a curious way of doing things, Lady Tennygal," was his ungracious remark, as he turned on his heel.

"Theodore, stop a minute! Have you been in the park?"

"What if I have?"

"Did you happen to meet Miss May? It is the children's hour for walking, but Laura says she went out without them. I do not understand it. Did you see anything of her?"

He did not give a flat denial, for Mrs. Barry could have contradicted him. Collecting his wits, he answered coolly—

"Miss May? Yes, I saw her sitting down near the trees by the cross-cut. She looked ill. I went up and inquired if I could do anything for her, but she declined my services, and marched away. It was just as Lady Harriet's carriage drove by."

"I think she is ill," said Laura, "she looked quite white all study time; but she did not tell me. When I asked her what was the matter, she told me to mind my lessons."

"Poor thing!" exclaimed Lady Tennygal. "Perhaps she has one of her bad headaches to-day!"

Now the substance of this conversation with her brother was innocently repeated by the countess in Mrs. Barry's dressing-room, when she ran in to say that Theodore knew of their arrival. It roused some doubt—or suspicion—in Mrs. Barry's mind. For she felt certain, from the manner of both Captain Devereux and the governess, that it was not a mere inquiry after health which had been passing between them. Why, then, should Captain Devereux say to his sister that it was?

"There's something behind this," thought Mrs. Barry. "It looked to me as though they felt they were detected in some way. I will watch a little—for

Harriet's sake I will—for oh! I wish she would break with him! She is blindly infatuated with Tody Devereux: but I know he is a bad man, and it will be a bad day's work for her if she marries him."

Mrs. Barry was as good as her word. Keen, persevering, and secretive, she was the very one to ferret out a secret. And in this instance she was urged on by self-interest: for Lady Harriet Ord's proposed marriage threatened her with the loss of a good portion of her income; and she was, besides, anxiously uncertain in regard to Harriet's future happiness.

But for several days she saw nothing; and the matter had nearly passed from her mind, when, one evening, soon after the ladies had left the dining-room, Mrs. Barry, in passing a staircase window, caught sight of Captain Devereux walking quickly towards a grove of trees on that side of the park. Why had he left the dining-room?—he, who was so fond of his wine?

My dear," she whispered to little Rose, when she went back to the drawing-room, "where's your governess this evening?"

"Oh, she is in the study."

"I thought she was to have come down with you and Laura."

"Mamma did ask her, but she said she had our exercises to correct."

Not another word said Mrs. Barry. She glided out, saw that Miss May was not in the study, put on a cloak, covering her head with its hood, like a true Irishwoman, and she also went out into the dusk of the evening. They were walking just where she expected to find them, in the shady path beyond the grove—Captain Devereux and the governess. Mrs. Barry halted amidst the large trunks of the budding trees.

"Well, don't you do anything so hazardous again," he was saying, in a reproving tone, and Mrs. Barry caught the words distinctly. "Sending a peremptory note to me in the dining-room that I must come out to you here that instant! Suppose it had fallen into the hands of Lady Tennygal! She had not left the room five minutes."

"I wish it had," was Miss May's answer, delivered in a passionate tone "If what I have heard to-day be true, I wish it had."

"Now, Sophia, don't give way to temper. We can both do that, on occasion, as you and I know, but this must not be one. Just calm yourself, and tell me what you are complaining of."

"I want to know the truth."

"What about?"

"Have you proposed to Lady Harriet Ord?"

"What in the name of wonder put such a thing

as that in your head?" he asked, in a voice teeming with astonishment; and little Mrs. Barry leaned forward, and put her sharp retroussé nose between the trunks of two proximate trees, and brought her sight to bear upon the parties. He was standing with his hands in his pockets, a slouching, favourite mode of his; and the poor young governess, as Mrs. Barry could not help thinking her, was gazing at him, her blue inquiring eyes starting from their pale lids, as if she would read into his very soul.

"One of the little girls said to-day in the schoolroom that Lady Harriet was to be her aunt—your wife," she slowly said, catching up her breath.

"And you believed it! and must make all this fuss and haste to ask me?" he rejoined, no doubt giving a word in his heart to his sister—for it must have leaked out through some imprudence of hers. "As if you could not have waited a proper opportunity."

"*Is it so?*"

"No, it is not. Harriet Ord would like to jump into my arms; and if I tacitly allow her and others to think that it is within the range of possibility I may some time let her take the leap, why do I do it?"

She did not speak: only stared at him still.

"And these are the sort of thanks I get!"

"The two-faced, diabolical wolf in sheep's clothing!"

heartily uttered Mrs. Barry, from between the trees. "Oh, if Harriet were only here!"

"If they told me to my face I was going to marry her, or any other woman, I should not contradict them," he went on. "A nice taste a man must have to marry Harriet Ord!"

"Were I sure you were deceiving me—that your attentions to Lady Harriet are real, I would—I would——"

"You would what?" he asked, his manner idly indifferent. "Let us hear."

"I would tell all to Lord and Lady Tennygal," she answered, bursting into tears. "I would tell Lady Harriet that she must not be your wife, for that you have made a solemn promise to marry no one but me. I would tell them that the banns for our marriage ——"

"Sophy, you'd do nothing of the sort," he interrupted: "you are no simpleton."

"If it came to such a pass as that——"

"But it is not coming to it. Lady Tennygal and Mrs. Barry and all the lot of them—she herself included—are possibly deluding themselves into the hope that I shall have the old Chinese image; but don't put yourself into a fantigue over the matter, whatever you may hear. Time enough to call out when you're hurt."

He walked away. Mrs. Barry, who did not choose to leave her hiding-place till both had disappeared, peeped at the governess. Miss May had seated herself in the rude garden-chair; her eyes were strained on vacancy, seeing nothing, and her whole attitude bespoke pain and misery. Suddenly her mood changed: and a frightful expression of anger arose to her face. Mrs. Barry could only compare it with that of a demon at the play.

Of course there was a dreadful hubbub; for Mrs. Barry, though she waited till the next day, did not bring her tale out so cautiously as she might have done. Accusings, and denials, and counter-accusings, and reproaches, and oaths: the latter, of course, from the angry Captain Devereux.

Mrs. Barry persisted in her story, and Captain Devereux persisted in his—which was, that Mrs. Barry must have dropped asleep after dinner and dreamed it. In this he was supported by Miss May: she affirmed that she had been correcting exercises in the study at the hour mentioned: had never quitted it; and he swore he had never stirred out of the dining-room. Poor Mrs. Barry was completely dumbfounded; especially when Lady Harriet Ord expressed her opinion in favour of the dream.

CHAPTER VII.

SOPHIA'S DESOLATION.

PASSION-WEEK arrived, and Lord Tennygal with it. Very much surprised, was he, to find the house in this uncomfortable and undecided state, one party in it mutually accusing the other.

He listened, in his calm matter-of-fact way, to the two sides of the case. His wife, when they were alone, actually shed tears. The affair, she told him, had so worried her, between her anxiety to do what was right, and her fear to do what was wrong, that she felt nearly as ill as ever. Lord Tennygal took an opportunity of speaking to his brother-in-law.

"Devereux," he said, "this is very bad. Lady Tennygal's governess ought to have commanded your respect. Were it not for the dangerous position your affairs are in, you should not remain in this house another hour."

"There's nothing wrong," answered Captain Devereux, "nothing at all. It is a delusion altogether.

That old mischief-making cat fell asleep in her room after dinner and must have had a dream—— "

"Pasha, man!" interrupted Lord Tennygal, "don't attempt to palm off your dreams upon me. Mrs. Barry heard Miss May say you could not marry Lady Harriet, because you were under a solemn engagement to marry *her*. She said something about *banns*. If—— "

"Mrs Barry did not hear her, then. She's a—— "

"Hear me out, Devereux, if you please. If you have been gaining Miss May's affections, under the promise of marriage, you are bound in honour to marry her, although she is only a governess. If, on the other hand, you have behaved ill, or in any way compromised the poor girl, I will never forgive it; and I hope Lady Harriet will not. But, whatever the truth is, I must be made acquainted with it, that I may know how to act."

"I have given my word once," sullenly replied Captain Devereux; "I don't see the use of repeating it ten times over. I deny it altogether; and I say that Mrs. Barry either invented or dreamed it."

"You persist in this?—to me?"

"I do. And to every one else."

"Then I must take another course."

"Look here, Tennygal. Mrs. Barry has been dead against my marriage with Harriet from the first; and I don't believe she'd stand at any invention to put it

aside. If she didn't dream the thing, she invented it."

"This is all you have to say to me upon the point, Devereux?"

"Every word."

Lord Tennygal next proceeded to hold an interview with Miss May. He spoke very kindly and considerately to her; but he begged her to confide in him, to let him know the truth, promising that if she did he would be a friend to her, whatever that truth might be. Miss May, however, was just as impervious as the ex-captain. She persisted, as he did, that Mrs. Barry must have invented the story or dreamed it: and Lord Tennygal was puzzled.

The earl was a clear-sighted man, reading people more truly than his wife did; and in the manner of both Miss May and the captain there was something he did not like—a want of sincerity.

He had never truly liked Miss May as governess to his children: and he now determined that she should not remain with them. But there was a difference between summarily turning a young lady from his house, and giving her due warning. Which course, he wondered, would the real facts, that he could not come at, justify? Like his wife, he only desired to act fairly by her and by themselves. If that were only a dream, for instance, of Mrs. Barry's, they would keep Miss

May until she obtained another situation and help her to find one: if it were not a dream, but fact, why that was another thing. He must try and discover daylight for himself, since no one seemed able to throw it upon him.

"Who were Miss May's references, Bessie?" asked Lord Tennygal, proceeding to his wife's room.

She had to look to Lady Langton's letters before she could answer, and found that Lady Langton spoke of a Mrs. Penryn, as having written in her favour: but who Mrs. Penryn was Lady Langton did not state.

"And probably did not know," observed Lord Tennygal. "She is the laziest woman in the world, is Lady Langton: just the one to be imposed upon with her eyes open."

"There was another recommendation from some solicitors; they wrote most strongly in her favour, Lady Langton said. They were friends of Miss May's late father's, I remember; partners, or something of that sort. Miss May was staying with them at the time.

"Yes! let me see—what was the firm? Quite a first-class one, I know."

The countess ran her eyes down Lady Langton's letters. "Here it is: Lyvett, Castlerosse and Lyvett!"

"I shall write to them," said the earl. "Do you say Miss May's late father was their partner?"

"I am not sure about that; he was a solicitor, and they knew him well. I think I had better write to Lady Langton, Frank."

"Do so, Bessie," was Lord Tennygal's reply.

The two letters, one to her ladyship the other to Lyvett, Castlerosse and Lyvett, were despatched on that same day, and reached in due course their destination.

Lady Langton read her letter with some concern. She was an extremely indolent woman in general, but she did not like the thought of having placed a governess with Lady Tennygal about whom some doubt had arisen; neither did she like to think she had been herself deceived.

For once she bestirred herself; driving first of all to the address that had been given her as Mrs. Penryn's. But of Mrs. Penryn she could obtain no tidings whatever. Other people lived in the house now (which proved to be a lodging-house, sufficiently respectable), and they had never heard Mrs. Penryn's name. She might have had the drawing-room apartments in the last tenant's time, they said; and that was all Lady Langton could learn.

Her doubts growing greater, herself more angry, she ordered her carriage down to Lyvett, Castlerosse and Lyvett's, and obtained an interview with Mr. Lyvett himself.

"You wrote, unasked, and recommended Miss May to me," urged Lady Langton, wrathfully. Conscious that her own carelessness was to blame, she naturally wished to find some one else to throw it upon.

"We never wrote at all to you, madam," coolly replied Mr. Lyvett, who was not accustomed to be spoken to in this tone, even by peeresses. "And so we are about to inform Lord Tennygal, from whom we have received a communication."

"If *you* did not write to me, some one of your firm must have written."

"Your ladyship is altogether mistaken."

"But the letters to Miss May were addressed here, to your care," next urged Lady Langton.

"Certainly not, so far as we are aware," rejoined Mr. Lyvett. "But May, her father, who was formerly our porter, may have had letters left here for him without our knowledge."

"Could that fact be ascertained?"

Mr. Lyvett rang his bell. Upon inquiry, it proved that the postman had received instructions to deliver all such letters into the hands of a Miss Jenkins, next door: who had forwarded them to the Mays'.

Lady Langton went home in a fury. Without delay she wrote to the Countess of Tennygal, candidly informing her that Miss May was a dreadful impostor, and had imposed upon her by false pretences.

Mr. Lyvett wrote also to the earl. His letter ran as follows:—

"MY LORD,

"In reply to the communication with which you have favoured us, we beg to acquaint your lordship that we know nothing of the matter you allude to. We never had a 'partner' or a 'friend' of the name of May. Until recently, a man of that name lived at our offices as porter, but we found cause to discharge him. This occurred last July, and we know nothing of his movements since that period. May had a daughter, and we deem it not impossible that she may be the individual who has imposed upon your lordship by a false recommendation in our name. She was educated above her station, and her Christian name is Sophia.

"We have the honour to be, my lord,

"Your lordship's obedient servants,

"LYVETT, CASTLEROSSE, AND LYVETT.

"The Right Honourable the Earl of Tennygal."

Both these communications reached Parkwater by the same post. Lord Tennygal read Mr. Lyvett's letter and threw it into his wife's lap.

"Take better care in future, Bessie," was all he said. "Miss May must leave to-day."

So the whole plot was discovered; and there re-

mained not a shadow of doubt that Miss May, or her friends for her, had cleverly furnished her own letters of reference.

The Countess of Tennygal was in a state of consternation. Easy-natured as she was, her indignation was aroused now. She would not see the governess, but would depute her housekeeper to pay and discharge her. "I could not have believed such a thing possible," she exclaimed. "I have heard of servants obtaining places under false pretences, but for a governess to do so seems incredible."

Lord Tennygal smiled a half-smile—perhaps at his wife's want of knowledge of the world.

"Many a governess has done it ere this," he said, "and many will do it again."

"But they can have no principle."

"That's another thing."

Lord Tennygal was not far wrong. There are governesses in families, even now, who have entered them under auspices as false as those by which Miss May obtained admittance to his.

"But Frank," resumed Lady Tennygal, her kinder nature reasserting its sway, "this does not prove that Miss May and Tody have been talking and walking together."

"Of course, it does not *prove* it," returned the earl, with rather a doubtful stress upon the word. "No;

and we will give her the benefit of the doubt, Bessie. I think I will see her myself."

"Oh, Frank, if you would! It was a very, very wrong thing to do; but I cannot help being sorry for her. Perhaps she had no friend in the world to help her to a situation."

"I will hear no justification of her on that score, Bessie," rather sternly spoke Lord Tennygal.

He saw Miss May, quietly told her of his application to Mr. Lyvett, and its result, and that she must, in consequence, leave Parkwater as soon as she could conveniently get her things packed—that day, if possible. Not a word did he say as to the other matter; and Miss May thoroughly understood that the cause he spoke of was truly the cause of her dismissal. The circumstances would, of course, have justified him in paying her only to that period; but Lord Tennygal, generous at heart, handed her a cheque for the running quarter—which was only just entered upon.

Sophia received it very meekly. She begged of Lord Tennygal, the scalding tears standing in her blue eyes, not to think of her more hardly than he could help. It was a friend of hers who had done it all, not herself; and her only hope now was that she should yet get on in the world so as to have no need to trouble friends.

"I'm sure I hope you will," said his lordship, heartily. "With regard to references, I fear—I fear Lady Tennygal——"

"I shall not require references, my lord," interrupted Sophia. "It is not my intention to continue to be a governess."

"Oh, very well," said he. "That's all right, then."

He wished her a civil good-bye, even shaking hands with her, for he was a man who could not be discourteous to any one. But Sophia keenly felt the fact that she did not see Lady Tennygal.

Captain Devereux, contriving to meet her in one of the passages, snatched a parting word. "You will go straight to London, Sophia——"

"No," she interrupted, "I shall go to Liverpool. And the very day you join me there, our marriage can take place. Which church is it that the banns——"

"Hush! here come your pupils. Good-bye, Sophia. Send me your address."

So that was over. And Miss May took her last farewell of Parkwater.

But Captain Devereux never joined her. He wrote letters to her instead. They were not so full of sweet phrases as they might have been; but they were full of pitiful bemoanings touching his hard fate, in being obliged to hide his head in that "fearful bog-hole,"

until his affairs could be so far settled that he might venture out of it, and into the sunny English world. Sophia May believed it all, was partially pacified, and most intensely miserable.

Captain Devereux decidedly came off the best. He not only imposed upon her with his idle tales, but he succeeded in persuading another credulous heart that he was not a wolf in sheep's clothing, but a falsely-accused, harmless lamb, the victim of old ladies' after-dinner dreams. And in less than a month after Easter, the public papers recorded the marriage of Theodore Hugh Devereux, third son of the Right Honourable Sir Archibald Devereux, with the Lady Harriet Ord.

CHAPTER VIII.

HARD TIMES.

IN the first-floor apartments of a house at Brompton, one winter evening, there stood a lady at the fire, holding to it first one foot, then the other. Her shoes were damp and muddy; she had only just come in from the wet streets; and her bonnet and cloak were not yet taken off.

It was Sophia May. But oh, how she was altered! Her once blooming, blushing face was pale and thin; it had, besides, a sharp, weary look upon it; and the eyes were sad, as though she had passed through sorrow. No one could have believed, seeing her now, that less than two years had elapsed since she quitted Parkwater.

She had passed through some experiences since then, and they had not tended to give her cheery views of life. Life, indeed, had been a somewhat hard battle with her ever since. For one thing, she had learned what the faith of man was worth; more

especially the faith of such a man as Theodore Devereux. He and his vows had proved alike false.

"How quickly shoes wear out!" she exclaimed, looking down at those she was holding to the fire: "these let in the wet already. I must afford myself another pair somehow. Somehow! It's all very well to say 'somehow,' for I don't know how. If the man won't let me have them on trust, I must wait till the next quarter's accounts come in. And people pay so slowly!"

A young servant-girl in a pinafore came upstairs with the candles and tea-tray. "If you please, ma'am," she said, as she put the tray on the table and proceeded to light the candles, "here's a gentleman come to the door; and he says if you are Miss May he should like to see you. He is waiting down in the passage."

"A gentleman!—to see me!" she exclaimed, feeling surprised. "Why, who can it be?" she added to herself. "Oh, I dare say it is somebody to offer me a fresh pupil, or to ask my terms."

She threw off her bonnet and cloak, settled her collar, pinned on a bow of blue ribbons which lay on the table, and turned to the glass over the mantel-piece to smooth the braids of her hair.

"You can show him up now, Mary."

The visitor entered. A young, well-dressed gentle-

man, somewhat given to display in the matter of ornaments—but it was the fashion to be so then. He was of light complexion, with a good-natured but not overwise cast of countenance, and a very light, scanty moustache. Approaching her, he held out his hand.

"Sophia, have you forgotten me?"

For a few moments she stared as though she had. "It is not Frederick Lyvett!" she exclaimed at length.

"I knew you would remember me. I was in the cigar-shop lower down and saw you cross the street and come in here. I thought I could not be mistaken, so I came and asked for you."

"At the first instant of my recognizing you," she said, sitting down, and motioning him to an opposite chair, "the emotion that rose to my mind was one of pleasure: but that is now giving place to pain. For the cruelty of your conduct is rising up fast before me."

"What cruelty?" he returned.

"Mr. Lyvett, if you have only come to insult me, I would ask why you have come at all? I should have thought a gentleman would not be guilty of doing so."

"What have I done?" he asked in amazement. "I never was cruel to any one, least of all to you. I think it was you who were cruel, not to leave your address when you quitted the old place. I have been

home nearly twelve months, and have never been able to hear of you. If you forgot me, I never forgot you, and I should only be too glad to renew our former friendship."

The young lady was keen-witted, both by nature and experience. These words of Frederick Lyvett's caused a doubt to arise in her mind whether some deceit had not been formerly practised on her; or whether, indeed, it had been but a misapprehension. Ever since Frederick Lyvett's departure on that sea-voyage that had separated them, a very sore feeling had lain on her mind in regard to it and to him.

"When you went away some two to three years ago, Mr. Lyvett, you pretended to me that you were sent to Valparaiso on pressing business."

"So I was."

"But as soon as you had sailed we were informed that you went of your own accord, and that it was a planned thing: planned that you might break with me."

"Who said that?"

"The firm. And they turned my father and mother out of the house the same day."

He sat looking at her for some minutes in evident bewilderment, and she at him. Light seemed to dawn upon him.

"Then, by Jove! you may depend that it *was* a planned thing. Planned by them against us both, Sophia; planned to separate us. If I had only suspected this at the time! I remember it did seem to me strange that I, inexperienced, and only just taken into the business, should be started out on an important mission."

"You did not willingly—purposely—run away from me, then?"

"No; on my sacred word of honour. I would not act so treacherously. It must have been my father's doings—and James's. I owe them something for this."

"Were you away long?"

"Eighteen months. What with their keeping me there on (I see now) frivolous pretences, and my knocking up (which I did), and a cruise I took in the South Seas, I was longer than I need have been. But won't you tell me all about yourself, Sophia? What did you do after my departure?"

"I tell you we were turned out of the house without notice."

"Upon what grounds?"

"Only that you had visited us."

"Shameful of my father! I don't know a more arbitrary man than he can be when he chooses, kind as he generally is. Where did you go?"

"My father and mother obtained another situation

after a little while, and I went into a nobleman's family as governess."

"That was pleasant. Did you stay in it?"

"Not a twelvemonth," rapidly answered Miss May. "My health grew delicate—governesses are so overworked, you know—and my friends sent me into the country to recruit my strength. I gave up all thoughts of going out after that; everybody's health will not stand it. Now I live here and teach privately in the neighbourhood, chiefly music. Some of my pupils I go to: some come to me. I was coming in from giving a music lesson when you saw me just now."

"Do you live here all alone?"

"All alone. I have a sitting-room and a bed-room. I never see a soul but my pupils. When the girl said a gentleman was inquiring for me, I thought she must be mistaken. Will you take some tea with me?"

"I cannot stop now. We have people to dinner this evening, and I must make a rush in the fleetest hansom I can catch, to get home and dress for it. I will call again to-morrow. I must tell you one thing, Sophia, before I go."

"Yes?" she said, rising.

"That you are very much altered."

They were standing face to face when he spoke, and he had taken her hand to say adieu. So that it

may have been the earnest and close gaze he cast upon her, that caused her to blush crimson, a deep, hot, glowing crimson.

"Not less beautiful," he added, as the rich colour lighted her features; "do not think I mean that: but, still, greatly changed. There is a look of worry on your countenance."

"How can it be otherwise?" was her answer. "Living, as I do, apart from all sympathy, possessing no congenial friends, and with an uncertain future before me? I can assure you, Mr. Lyvett, it is rather a hard struggle for an unprotected woman to get along in the world."

"True, true: that's worry enough. But brighter days may be in store for you," he added, with a meaning smile. "Think so, Sophia."

He quitted the room, and Sophia snatched one of the candles and went to the glass to survey herself. A dissatisfied expression stole to her countenance; but as she pushed and pulled at the braids of her hair, and stroked them in places with her finger, it changed to one of complacent vanity. The meaning of his parting sentence seemed to her clear enough: that he would be glad to renew their former footing, and address her honourably with the view of making her his wife.

"This is better luck than I dreamed of," she said,

as if talking to her image in the glass, "and if I play my cards well—who knows?"

But, as she was seated, taking her tea, reflection forced itself upon her, and her mood changed. Ought she to allow a man of honour to make her his wife? Or any man, indeed? None knew better than Sophia May that there existed grave impediments to it. She sat balancing the question in her mind. It was a knotty one, and not easily solved.

"If I could make sure that he would never, never know! It was not my fault," she passionately added; "and oh, it is cruel that my whole life should be blighted through the wickedness of that one false man! Yes, if I were sure that I could keep it from him, I might venture to be Frederick Lyvett's wife. And, once his wife, I should be sheltered from the storms of this cruel world; all my struggles and mortifications and difficulties would be over."

Ringing the bell, she sent the tea-things away, and was about to sit down to her piano when a knock was heard at the room door.

"It's that dreadful woman!" she said, with a shiver. "And I have not a farthing for her! I wish the floor would open and swallow her up—— Come in."

The landlady entered. She had come to demand the rent owing to her. She spoke civilly, for she was a respectable woman, and one of a superior class of

life; but her tone was cold. She disapproved of some of her lodger's ways. She believed that Miss May, who had a fair amount of teaching, could have paid regularly, if she had not been so extravagant in dress. Besides the rent, she had other debts in the neighbourhood, as the landlady chanced to know.

"Teaching is always flat in winter," observed Miss May. "Families are out of town."

The landlady thought that the class of families Miss May taught in were not out of town, but she passed over the remark.

"I have come upstairs to give you warning," she said, "for I cannot afford to go on in this way. It will be better for me to have the rooms empty, with the bill up and a chance of letting them, than to go on increasing the debt. To-morrow week I shall be obliged to you to vacate them: and I will not stop your boxes, Miss May, which I might do, but trust to your sense of justice to pay me off by degrees, as you can."

The speaker left the room, and Sophia May placed her elbows on the table, and leaned her head upon her hands. She was in a dilemmá. To leave now, might spoil the new prospect just flashing on her vista: let Frederick Lyvett know she was in debt, and he might be scared away for ever. If she changed her abode, the shopkeepers might take alarm and be down upon

her unpleasantly: and the neighbourhood she could not leave, because her teaching lay in it.

"I wonder if *he* would help me?" she suddenly said.

Once more she took a review of her position past and present, bending her knitted and aching brow upon her feverish hand. From her father and mother she could expect no help: in point of fact, she did not even know where to look for them in all the wilderness of London. After quitting Mr. Lyvett's, her father obtained another situation. It was a far inferior one; and when Sophia sought them out, which was not for some months after her departure from Parkwater, a great distaste for the poor way in which they lived took possession of her. "It's of no good, mother," she said; "I can't reconcile myself to come down here; and there's an end of it." The mother sighed. "It's cruel of you to say it, Sophiar; but it's all along of your edication. It were a great mistake. If we had but brought you up to be the same as us!" "But you didn't, you see," returned Sophia: "mistake, or no mistake, it can't be altered now." That was the one only time Sophia had seen her father and mother. She told them she was about to establish herself somewhere in London as music-teacher, in what locality she did not yet know, but would write to them when she was settled. She did

write—it was many weeks afterwards—and the letter was returned to her through the post with "gone away" written on it. Sophia rightly guessed the cause of the removal. She had seen in the *Times* the death of the master whom her father then served, and concluded that it had deprived him of his situation. Since then, she had not looked after them; she had not had the time, she told herself: and so she did not know their address, and they did not know hers. Her Aunt Foxaby had died whilst she was at Parkwater.

No; she had neither friends nor help to look to; only herself. And, as she had just said, getting along was very hard! As Frederick Lyvett's wife—oh, what a triumph it would be! how all would be changed!

And there was only one single hindrance: which might be no hindrance at all, for it might never be disclosed. I could do this, and I could do the other, reasoned Sophia in her delusive hope. Sophistry beguiles the best of us. Still, but for the loose principles and the absurd notions instilled into her mind by her early training, including that of the Caterpillar literature, it might not, in this one grave instance, have beguiled even Sophia May. She resolved to suppress all inconvenient remembrances; and Frederick Lyvett's fate was sealed.

"And money for pressing present needs I must

have," concluded Sophia, bringing her reflections to a close. "He *must* help me. I shall write and demand it."

She put her writing materials before her; wrote, sealed, and addressed a letter. Then she drew up a short notice to send to the *Times*.

CHAPTER IX.

THE ADVERTISEMENT IN THE "TIMES."

In a desirable quarter of a fashionable winter watering-place, where the communication with London is speedy and oft, there sat, one morning, a lady and gentleman at breakfast in a room that faced the sea. Colonel and Lady Harriet Devereux. Upon his marriage he had repurchased into the army: hence his rise in military rank.

Lady Harriet was plain—it has been already said—but the goodness of her face and its subdued look of sorrow rendered her an object of interest to a stranger. Colonel Devereux was plain too, far plainer than he used to be, with his disagreeable black eyes, and his dark dissipated face. He looked much on the wrong side of forty now; older than his actual years; for which he may have been indebted to his irregular life and to his irregular temper. He was dressed in a flowered crimson-silk dressing-gown, looking rather loose about the neck; and he lay back in his easy-

chair, yawning and twirling his great black whiskers. Something had delayed the post that morning, including the newspapers. It was quite sufficient to put out the colonel; to render him more morose than usual. His temper, never good, had grown very bad indeed, almost unbearable: the result of his indulgence of it.

Suddenly he took up his cup, drank what was in it, and pushed it from him with a jerk. His wife drew it towards her.

"You need not give me any more of that trash. I have had enough for one morning."

"If you would come in earlier and go to bed, you would feel more inclined for breakfast," she observed, in a quiet tone—one that struggled not to show its long-subdued resentment. "It was four o'clock this morning."

He did not condescend to reply, but leaned forward and pulled the bell. The servant answered it in hot haste: he knew his master.

"Bring my meerschaum."

"Oh, pray do not smoke in this room!" pleaded his wife in alarm. "It makes me feel so sick."

"If you don't like it you can go out of it," was the uncivil reply. "My meerschaum—do you hear? What do you stand staring there for?"

The servant did hear, and flew away. But a longer

interval elapsed than his master thought necessary, and he had rung another violent peal when the man appeared.

"Is this how you obey orders?"

"The postman came, sir, and I waited to take the letters from him," answered the man, as he laid down the meerschaum, the *Times*, and some letters before his master. Glancing at the addresses of the latter, the colonel flung two of them, with a most ungracious movement, towards his wife, opened the third, read it, and put it in the fire. Then he unfolded the *Times*, and his wife took up the supplement. Her eye glanced, as the eyes of many ladies will glance, to the top of its second column. There was only one mysterious advertisement to-day, and that she proceeded to read aloud, in what she meant for a merry tone. Poor thing! she strove to keep up at least a semblance of good feeling between herself and her husband, but hers was a hard lot. One with a less enduring spirit would not have borne it.

"'The Corsair. A letter awaits him at the old address. Something has occurred. Must send for it without delay. Toujours triste, et la saisonnette."

"What nonsense they do put in!" she exclaimed. "I wonder whether the persons these notices are meant for ever see them or understand them!"

Lady Harriet looked at her husband as she spoke,

and was astonished at the expression of his eyes. They were strained on her with a half-incredulous, half-angry glare. Not so much meant for her—at least she thought so—as for what she had read. Had she offended him by reading it?

"What is the matter, Theodore?" she timidly asked.

The colonel recovered his countenance.

"Matter? Nothing. What should there be?"

"You were looking at me so fiercely."

"Well I might be, to hear you read aloud that folly."

Her eyelids drooped, drooped to conceal the indignant tears; but she was patient still, and did not retort. He seized his pipe with the fine name, crammed it full of tobacco, lighted it, and puffed out as much smoke as he could puff, probably with the hope of driving her away: but it was his usual mode of smoking. It had the effect desired, and she left the room. The instant she had departed, he took the supplement, and devoured the very lines she had read aloud.

"Cursed bother!" he muttered. "I must send for that letter, now! I thought all annoyance from that quarter was over and done with. What 'something' has occurred? Unless—— I hope it has!"

He was still gazing at the lines, as if the gazing at them would solve the enigma, when a servant-maid came into the room.

"Lady Harriet has sent me to ask if you will please step into the nursery, colonel?"

"What for?"

"The little girl is ill, sir."

"What good can I do if she is?"

"Her ladyship thought——"

"I can't come yet, I am busy," he sharply interrupted. "Leave the room."

Yet it was his own child!

That the advertisement was addressed to him, "The Corsair," he well knew, and he took steps to obey its behest, and have the letter from the old address, which was one in town, conveyed to him. It reached him safely. He shut himself into his room alone, while he opened it. And if you are curious to see its contents, reader, here they are:—

"You *must* help me. A gentleman who was attached to me before I knew you has returned from abroad, and is, I think, inclined to make me his wife. He used to think me worthy of being so; he does still. You have *called* me an angel before now: he thinks me one: and, if not rudely undeceived, it will be une affaire finie. I have several pressing liabilities upon me: rent, bills, and something else that you know of. I am to be turned out of these rooms, which I occupy, in a week, because I cannot pay. If

this is not prevented, and if the debts come to his knowledge, it will set him thinking, and most probably startle him away. Surely you will aid me! It is to your interest to do so. About seventy or eighty pounds will suffice; but it must come to me without the delay of an unnecessary hour. If I can only accomplish this, the ambition of my early life will be gratified, for I shall be raised to a position in society. Mind that you fail me not.

"S. M."

With a darkened brow he scowled over the letter, pulling at his black whiskers—an inveterate habit of his, especially when put out. "*She* raised to a position in society!" he scornfully spoke. "I shall tell her that it is waste of time to trouble me."

Opening his desk to write a refusal, he put the paper before him, and dipped his pen in the ink. But irresolution supervened, and he rose and paced the room.

"She's such a tigress when put out," said he, politely. "There's no knowing what she may do if I refuse: find me out, down here, and come bothering me, or something! But it is for the last time," he added, finally sitting down to the desk, and dashing off a few lines rapidly:—

"When we squared up our scores, I handed you the

balance, in a lump, as you desired. If you have spent it, that is no concern of mine. The prospect you allude to is a lucky one, if it can be accomplished; but it is impossible for me to help you to the extent required. I am as poor for my station as you are for yours: and you know that all I have is my wife's, not mine. I send you fifty pounds; it is the utmost I can do, and is final.

"T. H. D."

Miss Sophia May received this letter and its enclosure. She paid her landlady, to the latter's extreme surprise, told her that she should remain in her lodgings for the present, paid some other claims, and went on swimmingly. Frederick Lyvett, who held a share in his father's practice now, became a constant evening guest: she received him with pleasure, and played off her various fascinations upon him as she had done in the days gone by. Whatever qualms of conscience had at first pricked her, as to encouraging the hopes of this gentleman, were thrust aside for good. He had not outlived his partiality for music, and was never tired of standing over her while she played and sang. And although Sophia May lived alone, and no third person was present to break their interviews, not a look or word escaped either of them that the most fastidious censor could have found fault

with. Once he wished to take her to one of the theatres: she laughingly declined, and told him he knew nothing about propriety. He urged that he had formerly taken her, and where was the harm? Oh, no harm, she answered, but she was only an inexperienced girl then, little acquainted with the usages of society. All this *told* upon Frederick Lyvett: her perfectly correct manners, her apparently high principles, her struggles to maintain herself creditably, and her success (for he saw nothing to the contrary), the shameful way in which she and her friends had been treated for his sake: all this, with her sweet singing and her rare beauty, combined to render her in his eyes very much what Miss May had said—an angel. She pleased equally his judgment, his taste, and his inclination; and he soon began to debate why he should not take her for good and all. The answer suggested itself, that she was far beneath him in birth. True; but her education, mind, and manners would, so he reasoned, adorn any rank, so why should he not raise her to his? Of course, there would be one objection—the opposition of his family. But he asked himself the question, and asked it very often, was the choosing a wife a matter in which a man ought to consult his family? Not a dishonourable thought had ever crossed Frederick Lyvett's mind in regard to her.

Upon his return from abroad, it struck him almost as a blow to find Sophia had disappeared, together with her father and mother; that a fresh porter had long been installed at the office. What had become of May, he asked. May, he was briefly told in answer, had left them and taken service with another firm. Fred Lyvett found out the firm—which consisted of one gentleman only—and saw May and his wife. He inquired after Sophia. They did not know where Sophia was, they said; and said truly—for it was before she called upon them. Sophia was out somewhere as governess, they told him; her first place was in Ireland, in some lord's family, but they had reason to believe that she had quitted it for another. They had not heard from her very lately; and—that was all they knew, or had to say. Some weeks afterwards, Fred went down to them again—for he could not forget Sophia: and then he found that they were gone away from the place in consequence of the death of the master, and no one seemed to know where they could be found. From that time Frederick Lyvett had never seen anything of the porter and his wife, had never so much as heard the name of May mentioned. He was beginning to look upon the past episode in his life as a thing gone by and done with; was indeed beginning to forget Sophia, until that most fatal evening when, chancing to be in the neigh-

bourhood of Brompton, he saw her pass in the street. And so the old acquaintanceship was renewed; and now he was more madly in love than ever: and Sophia, on her part, saw her aspiring hopes and dreams drawing nearer and nearer towards realization as the days and weeks went on; saw it with a glowing satisfaction that few could imagine, but which had nevertheless some trembling in it.

But in that interview with Mr. Fred Lyvett, May and his wife had suppressed the cause of their leaving the old firm, had said nothing of their summary ejection. In fact, they did not presume to allude to past events in any way. No one else had enlightened him; and therefore the fact—that they had been turned away through him—had come upon him all the more startlingly from Sophia.

He questioned her somewhat minutely as to her life during the interval of his absence. Sophia parried it as well as she could, but some of the questions she was obliged to answer. For instance, when he said to her one day, "What was the name of the nobleman in whose family you lived in Ireland?" she could not pretend to have forgotten it; she had to say Lord Tennygal. She left because of her health, she told him; and after a long respite of country air, when she was staying with an old lady known to her aunt Foxaby, she came to the resolve not to be a resident

governess again, but to try and get music pupils. And she told it all so artlessly that Fred Lyvett would as soon have thought there was guile or untruth in himself as in her. And thus the months of the spring went on.



CHAPTER X.

WARNING.

ONE evening Mr. Lyvett sat at home in his handsome residence at the West-End. His wife and daughters were out; Frederick had not come in to dinner at all: and he, being alone, had dropped off into an after-dinner doze in his easy-chair. The entrance of some one aroused him. His eyes were only half open, and he took it to be his younger son.

"I say, Fred—— Oh, it is you, James."

James Lyvett drew a chair near his father. Mr. Lyvett—a very courteous man even to his children—tried to shake off his sleepiness.

"I am paying you a late visit, father," began James; "but I have just heard something about Fred. It's not very pleasant. I thought I would come at once and speak to you; I knew my mother and the girls would be out."

"Nothing has happened to him—no accident with that young horse he drives?" exclaimed Mr. Lyvett,

who was still only half awake, in spite of his efforts. "He was to have gone with your mother and the girls to-night, but he did not come to go with them."

"No, no, nothing has happened," returned James, in rather an impatient tone. "Do you remember that foolish business of Fred's—his getting himself entangled with old May's girl, when you shipped him off to Valparaiso?"

"Yes. Well?" returned Mr. Lyvett, now very wide awake.

"He is intimate with her again."

"No!"

"He is. Jones came up to dine with me this evening, and he told me of it after dinner, when we were alone. He heard it somehow."

"Where is she? How did Fred find her?"

"She lives somewhere in Brompton. I can't say how Fred found her out. Jones did not know."

"What is she doing at Brompton?"

"Teaching music, I believe. Jones knows nothing against her. Fred is up there with her every day of his life."

"Well, if Fred chooses to play the fool, he must, that's all," testily retorted Mr. Lyvett.

"Yes; but he has no right to play it and disgrace the family. Jones thinks he means to marry her."

"Nonsense, James! Fred's not such a simpleton as all that."

"I would not answer for him, father. The girl must have obtained a pretty good hold upon his mind, for him to renew his intimacy with her after the lapse of two or three years."

"What has brought her back to London? I thought she was away; in Ireland or somewhere."

"Fred knows, I suppose. I don't. Jones thinks she has been teaching in Brompton for some time; has got a tolerably good connection together."

"I'll tell you what, James—— Who is that, coming up-stairs?"

"Fred himself, I think. It is like his step."

"Then I'll have the matter out at once," angrily exclaimed Mr. Lyvett.

Fred himself it was. He came into the room, whistling, an evening newspaper in his hand.

"Frederick," began Mr. Lyvett, in a temperate voice, "how is it you were not here, to escort your mother and sisters to-night?"

"I did not intend to go with them, father. I told Fanny so.

"Where have you been?"

"Been?" echoed Mr. Fred, rather astonished at the question: for Mr. Lyvett was not in the habit of cross-questioning his sons. "To lots of places. A fine night, James, is it not?"

"Perhaps you have been to Brompton?"

"To Brompton, sir!" repeated Fred, in a dubious accent.

"Here, come and sit down. I don't go to bed this night until you and I have had an understanding. A pretty thing James has heard: that you are playing the fool again with that Sophia May!"

"Pray, who told you so?" demanded Frederick, turning to his brother.

"That is of no consequence," was the reply of Mr. James Lyvett.

"Have you renewed your intimacy with her, or not?" sharply interrupted Mr. Lyvett.

"Yes, I have," replied the younger son. "I do not wish to deny it. I have a very great friendship for her, and I am proud of it."

"Well, she's a nice individual to acknowledge a friendship for," sarcastically cried Mr. Lyvett. "You might remember, Master Fred, that you are speaking to your father."

"Why, what do you take her for, sir?" was the indignant question.

"For old May's daughter originally: for an adventuress lately, and a pretty clever one. What do *you* take her for?" added Mr. Lyvett, looking keenly at his son.

"For one of the best creatures that ever struggled

with an unfortunate lot," returned Fred, with something like emotion. "It is rather too bad to call her an adventuress, father."

"I call her what I please: and what I deem to be appropriate," said Mr. Lyvett.

"Her beauty and virtues would adorn a throne," cried Fred, going quite off into rhapsody. "She was, unfortunately, born in an obscure sphere, but her qualities fit her for a high one. I only wish you knew her, sir."

"It is quite enough for one of the family to boast of that honour," was the sarcastic rejoinder of Mr. Lyvett. "I should like to ask you one thing, Frederick: what good do you expect to come of this? Do you think it is creditable for my son to go visiting people on the sly?"

"I have not gone on the sly; I have gone openly. Except that I have said nothing about it at home. I was thinking of doing that."

"Oh, indeed?"

"And you could not expect me to be very open on the point, sir, after what you and James did formerly. Banishing me off to Valparaiso, on purpose to separate us, and then turning her and her parents out of doors."

"I had nothing to do with the Valparaiso business," said James.

"Some of you had, at any rate."

"We may as well cut short the discussion, or it will last till your mother comes home, and it is of no use worrying her with such a subject," said Mr. Lyvett. "Frederick, you must give up this nonsense. I must have your word of honour upon it."

"I am not prepared to do that," was Fred's reply.

"Why?"

The young man was silent.

"Why, I ask you?" irritably repeated Mr. Lyvett.

"My friendship with Miss May is more serious than you imagine, sir. I wish to make her my wife."

An ominous pause. Then Mr. Lyvett broke it with a mocking laugh.

"James, go out and get a cap and bells. We will fit him out for Astley's. He shall play the fool's part in the next new pantomime. Oh, Fred, you had better go to school again and learn wisdom!"

"A pretty pantomime it is, that he is enacting now," said James, with a contemptuous look at his brother. "I am ashamed of you, Frederick."

"It is a man's privilege that he may marry whom he pleases," said Frederick.

"No, sir; he has not a right to marry whom he pleases, when the step will disgrace himself and his family," retorted Mr. Lyvett.

"My family are prejudiced, or they would not deem this a disgrace. I acknowledge that Sophia May's

birth and rearing are not equal to mine; but many better men than I have got over that obstacle in marrying, and found themselves none the worse for it."

"We will put her birth out of the discussion, if you will," said Mr. Lyvett; "her rearing also. There is a more serious obstacle, Frederick. Pray are you aware that she went out as governess?"

"Yes. In Lady Tennygal's family"

"And did you hear how she got in there?"

"Got in?" echoed Frederick. "I don't understand you, sir."

"She got in to Lord Tennygal's house by fraud. Gave false accounts of herself; forged certificates, and all that Now you are a lawyer, Fred, and know how that can be punished."

"Nonsense, sir! You must be under a mistake"

"I am under no mistake," returned Mr. Lyvett. "One of the letters of recommendation purported to come from us—Lyvett, Castlerosse, and Lyvett. Her father was palmed off as a dead man, but once an eminent solicitor and friend of ours. Other recommendations were equally false; and, on these, she was admitted to the family. Lord Tennygal applied to us afterwards, and to Lady Langton; who, in point of fact, was the first person imposed upon, as it was she who saw the certificates and engaged Miss May; and thus the plot was laid bare. Miss May's services

in Lord Tennygal's family were dispensed with the same day."

"But Miss May could have known nothing of these false recommendations!" exclaimed Fred Lyvett.

"Of course not," mimicked his father. "They dropped into Lady Langton's hands from the clouds, just in the nick of need. What a greenhorn you are, Fred!"

"If you knew her, you would not suspect her of such conduct," retorted Frederick. "She is honour itself. Perhaps her parents, over-anxious, may have been tempted—— But I have no right to say this. However it may have been, I will stake my name that she herself was innocent."

"You'd lose the stake. There can be little doubt that she herself furnished them. At any rate, there can be none that she was a party to the conspiracy. I forget the details now, but it was all plain enough to me at the time. The old Dowager Langton came to me at the office, and we went into the matter together. A fine rage she was in; threatened to prosecute Miss May. Steer clear of her, Fred, my boy: she's too clever for you."

"Of course, I will inquire into this," conceded Frederick. "But I am perfectly sure she will come out of it as bright as crystal: you could not look at her, sir, and believe otherwise."

"You need not talk about looks, Fred," broke in James. "You never could read people or countenances in your life. You know it."

"I will answer for her perfect innocence in the affair beforehand," repeated Frederick to his father, turning his back on James. "What other people did was no fault of hers, sir; and I shall not allow it to make any difference in my intentions."

"Then understand me, Frederick; you must choose between this girl and your family. If you degrade yourself by marrying her, you are no longer one of us, and you must leave the business."

"That's all talk," thought Fred. "Said to intimidate me."

"Either he or I shall go out of it," added Mr. James, in a determined, haughty manner. And he rose and said good-night to his father.

It broke up the conference. Indeed, Mrs. Lyvett and her daughters entered almost immediately.

On the following evening Frederick dashed up to Brompton. It was of little use his going in the daytime, as Miss May was then engaged with her teaching. She was at tea.

"Is it true, Sophia, that you knew of those false recommendations?" he asked, after a confused and hurried account of what he had heard.

"Oh *dear* no," replied Sophia, lifting her hands in

horror at the bare idea. "*I* know of them! what do you take me for? My Aunt Foxaby managed it all. A friend of hers, Mrs. Penryn, who interested herself greatly for me, wrote to Lady Langton in my favour. What she really said, I know no more than you, for I never saw the letter, but it would appear that it was not too clearly worded. She said, I believe, that my father had been attached to the house of Lyvett, Castlerosse, and Lyvett; Lady Langton took that to imply that he had been a partner, and wrote to that effect to Lady Tennygal. The first intimation I had that anything was wrong came from Lord Tennygal. I had been there several months then, and had given satisfaction You may imagine my surprise. It came upon me like a blow; for it caused them to dismiss me. Nothing underhand, much less wrong, was intended by my Aunt Foxaby and Mrs. Penryn; they would not be capable of it; and they would both tell you so if they were not dead."

"But the letter of recommendation purporting to come from Lyvett, Castlerosse, and Lyvett?" pursued Frederick.

"I never comprehended that," acknowledged Sophia, all fair-spoken candour. "It was always a puzzle to me. My own opinion was, that no such letter was ever written: if it was, it must have been the work

of some enemy who wished me ill. I did not seek much to fathom it; the matter altogether was too painful to me; and where was the use when my situation was gone? I'm sure, I thought I should have fainted with grief the day they turned me away. One thing alone bore me up—the consciousness of my innocence."

"If ever I desert her, may I be—smothered!" ejaculated Fred to himself, in an ecstasy of admiration. "I knew it would prove to be no fault of hers. My father is so prejudiced that he would impute anything to her. And James is worse, for he is as exclusive as the day. I'll marry her in private at once; and if they find it out, they must storm, that's all."

He sat lost in thought, letting the cup of tea which Sophia had handed him grow cold on the table. Perhaps Frederick Lyvett's guardian angel was secretly struggling within him against the resolution. Certain it was, that many reasons presented themselves before him why it should not be. But a man in love and a wilful man are alike hard to grapple with; and Fred Lyvett threw doubts to the winds.

"Sophia," said he, lifting his head at length, "my people at home are regularly set against us: it is of no more use to ask their consent to our union than it would be to ask the Lord Chancellor's. I see nothing

for us but a private marriage. You are wearing yourself out with this lesson-giving; but, as my wife, you will at least have leisure and comfort. I don't take anything like the income James has, but I get a good round sum, and I think it is the best thing we can do."

Sophia thought so too. She sighed down her satisfaction, and timidly whispered that she would "resign her will to his."

He went on to say that he thought she had better give up her teaching instanter, and go down to some quiet place in the country where there was a rural church. He would come and see her on the Sundays; and when things were in readiness, say in a month or so, they would be married. Sophia said "Yes" to all.

Then they began to discuss arrangements, and the evening passed rapidly on till the clock struck ten. It was Fred's signal for leaving, and he wished her good-night.

Putting her feet on the fender when he had gone, she sat, plunged into the golden visions that the future was to bring forth. But all in a moment, when they were at their brightest, there came upon her, unbidden, a thought of a different nature. It gave her a fit of shivering, and she shook for a minute or two from head to foot.

"Oh," she cried to herself, "would it not be better to refuse him even yet, and go on as I am going?

Why should I shiver, suddenly, like this? Does it come to me as a warning?"

On the following morning, when Fred Lyvett's cab waited for him, as he was about to leave home, the groom having some trouble to restrain the impatient horse, Mrs. Lyvett called her son to her side.

"What is it, mother? I am in a hurry. My father is already gone, and I shall get in for it again for being late."

"Only one little minute," she said. "What is this whisper that I have heard?"

Fred's cheek flushed. He dearly loved his mother. He sat down on the sofa, and Mrs. Lyvett rose and placed her hands on his shoulders, looking into his face with her loving eyes.

"Your father has been much put out. I have gathered enough to know that it is about you—that you are acquainted with some one not at all proper—some one that you say you will marry."

"That's my father's version. She——"

"Hush, Frederick, I would rather not enter into it. I only want to say a word. You are aware that you were ever my favourite child. I have loved you dearly—better than I did the others."

He laid hold of his mother's hands and kept them, and she leaned forward till her cheek touched his.

"It is but a little word that I wanted to whisper,"

she continued to repeat. "Dearest Frederick, remember that no good comes of disobedience; *never be betrayed into it.* If your father is averse to your wishes, and thinks them unsuitable, wait with patience. Remember your duty to him, and perhaps time will soften obstacles and bring your hopes to pass. You know that he has only the interest of his children at heart. Be not tempted to act rebelliously against your parents, for no good would attend it. It is your mother, my darling boy, who tells you this."

She kissed his cheek with affectionate earnestness, and hurried from the room, wishing to avoid further mention of the topic then and always. Never, never did she think that more than a word was needed by him, who had always been so considerate and obedient.

Frederick Lyvett descended to his cab, and drove down to the office in so sober a style that his groom wondered. He was in a serious mood all that day: should it be disobedience, or should it not? He was well-principled, and had hitherto been affectionately dutiful. If that unhappy girl had not taken so deep a hold on his heart!

CHAPTER XI.

A STOLEN MARCH.

IT is truly strange how things come about in this world of ours! A few weeks after the above events, Mr. Castlerosse, the second partner in the house of Lyvett, was seeking a clergyman with whom to place his son to read for Oxford. One Saturday morning, a client, who was at the offices on business, strongly recommended to him a Mr. Balfour, the incumbent of a retired parish in Surrey. So Mr. Castlerosse, being an impulsive man, took an early dinner and went down without delay to see Mr. Balfour. Luck did not favour Mr. Castlerosse: Mr. Balfour had gone to town, and would not be home till late at night. So Mr. Castlerosse, unwilling to have had his journey for nothing, and finding there was a comfortable inn, telegraphed to his family that he should not be at home until Monday.

Mr. Castlerosse was a good churchman, rarely missing divine service. But on the Sunday morning

the skies were so blue, and the leaves of the trees so green, the air was altogether so refreshing, and the country so lovely, that perhaps he may have been forgiven for strolling and sitting in the fields and lanes instead of attending church. He never forgave himself for it afterwards.

He went to church in the evening· and after service was over, walked home by invitation with Mr. Balfour, and sat with him for an hour or two Upon rising to leave, he inquired, pursuing the thread of their conversation, whether Mr. Balfour would not go to town with him by the early train: for the clergyman was to go up to see Mrs. Castlerosse and his future pupil.

"No," answered Mr. Balfour. "I have a marriage to perform."

"You do not get many of them, I expect, in this little place," cried Mr. Castlerosse.

"Very few indeed. These parties are from London. The lady has been down here three or four weeks lodging at a farmhouse."

"She seems a nice, ladylike young woman," interposed Mrs. Balfour; "a Miss May. The gentleman is a Mr. Lyvett."

"May! Lyvett!" echoed Mr. Castlerosse, recalling the old affair and the shipping off of Fred: he had not been informed of the recent trouble. "What's his Christian name? What sort of a looking man is he?"

"A fair young man, with a light moustache and an eyeglass. And," added the clergyman, referring to a paper, "his name is Frederick Lyvett and hers Sophia May."

The effect this information had on Mr. Castlerosse, who was a most excitable man, was such as to startle Mr. and Mrs. Balfour. He soon explained himself, and demanded that the ceremony should be stopped.

"I have no power to refuse to marry them," observed the clergyman. "They are both of age."

"Of age!" repeated the heated Mr. Castlerosse. "Heaven and earth, sir! Don't I tell you it is a horrible runaway marriage, that will ruin Fred for life, and drive Mr. Lyvett mad?"

"They were asked in church for the third and last time this morning, and both of them were present."

"Good Heavens!" cried Mr. Castlerosse. "And I should have heard it, had I only been there, and could have pounced upon him! Well, sir, I tell you that this marriage, if it takes place, will drive his father mad, and give his mother a heartache for life. The girl is no better than an adventuress."

But still the clergyman shook his head, and urged that without just grounds he could not stop it.

Away tore Mr. Castlerosse to the telegraph-station. No one was there who could send a message: it was beyond hours. Mr. Castlerosse stormed and bribed

and a porter ran for the telegraph-clerk. More storming, more bribing: and at length a message was flashed to the head office in London, and Mr. Castlerosse returned to the inn to sleep.

Frederick Lyvett was also sleeping there. For as Mr. Castlerosse ascended the stairs to his bedroom, he saw a door opened in the corridor, and a pair of boots thrust out by an arm in a shirt-sleeve. Whether the half-dressed gentleman saw him he did not know, but he recognized Frederick Lyvett. "Ah, ah, Master Fred, my boy!" he thought, "you'll get a pill, perhaps, instead of a wife." He did not attempt to see and reason with him. Instinct told him it would be useless. He preferred to leave that to Mr. Lyvett, who would be down by the earliest train.

At six o'clock the following morning, Mr. Castlerosse was up, and away to the railway-station, where he had the pleasure of sitting on the bench outside for nearly an hour before it was opened. With the first appearance of a porter, he rushed up and seized hold of him The porter recognized him as the gentleman who had played some antics in the telegraph-office the night before, wanting to telegraph up to the chief office that no clerk was in attendance.

"What time does the first train get in here from London?" demanded Mr. Castlerosse.

"The first train don't stop here," said the porter.

"Then the first that does stop —— But he would no doubt get a special," he added to himself.

"Well, it don't get in much afore 8.45. It's due at 8.40; but the steam ain't never up with a will the forepart of a journey. It ain't had time to get itself up."

"Eight forty-five! That's a quarter to nine," groaned Mr. Castlerosse, "and they are to be married at eight! I hope and trust he will be able to get a special. Are there any flys or coaches to be had here?" he inquired aloud.

"There's a man as keeps one fly. He don't get much to do. He's a blacksmith by trade, and he ain't often called out of his forge to drive."

"Where can I find him?"

"He lives a rood or two t'other side of the Wheat-sheaf Inn."

Away walked Mr. Castlerosse. The blacksmith's shop was easily found, and the blacksmith was in it, shoeing a horse. A tall, intelligent-looking man.

"I am told that you have a fly for hire," began Mr. Castlerosse.

"A one-horse fly, sir."

"I want you to be with it at the station this morning, to wait for a gentleman whom I expect——"

"By up train or down, sir?" interrupted the man.

"Down. And when he comes, drive him with all

speed to the church. Be in waiting there directly you can get ready; by half-past seven, if possible. I think he will come by a special train."

The blacksmith looked up from his employment. "I can't take the job, sir, if you want me to be there before the regular down train. I could be there for that, but not before. I have a wedding this morning at eight o'clock."

"You must go to the station," peremptorily spoke Mr. Castlerosse. "I don't care what I pay you."

"It is not a question of payment, sir," civilly answered the man. "I have engaged myself to this lady and gentleman, and I would not do such a thing as go from my word. I take them to the church, wait for them, and take them from there to the station, to catch the quarter to nine down train."

Mr. Castlerosse seemed beaten on all sides. He turned crustily from the unmanageable blacksmith; went back to the station, and charged the porter to tell any gentleman who might arrive by a special train from London that he must make for the church without the loss of a moment. Then bending his steps towards the churchyard, he paced about amongst the gravestones. In his state of excitement he could not sit still, or remain away from the chief scene of action. A little before eight the doors were opened; he entered the church and ensconced himself behind

a pillar, where he could see and not be seen. There were no signs yet of Mr. Lyvett: but presently the wedding-party came in.

The bride was first, looking lovely; that fact struck even the prejudiced mind of Mr. Castlerosse. Who on earth was conducting her? Mr. Castlerosse stared, rubbed his eyes, and stared again. To his horrible conviction, his unbounded indignation, it was—his own favourite nephew! A medical student, graceless in the sight of the rest of the world, painstaking in that of Mr. Castlerosse, whom *he* had had thoughts of benevolently setting up in practice; the good-looking, careless, random Charley Castlerosse.

Scarcely had the clergyman begun the service when Mr. Castlerosse glided forward. "I forbid the marriage," he said. "I can show cause why it should not take place.'

A shudder passed through the frame of Sophia May. She did not know who caused the interruption, or what plea was going to be urged. Her face assumed the paleness of the grave, and she bent it forward, and hid it on the altar rails. The bridegroom, however, turned and confronted the intruder. Whilst Charley Castlerosse never turned at all, for he had recognized the voice, and hoped to escape unseen, only wishing there was an open grave at hand, that he might drop into it.

The scene that ensued was one never yet witnessed in that quiet little church; but Mr. Castlerosse failed to show any legal grounds for delaying the marriage. "His father will be here directly," he screamed; "he'll be here with a strait-waistcoat; he's coming by the first train!"

Frederick Lyvett took a high tone. He dared Mr. Castlerosse to show just or legal cause for his interruption, and he dared the clergyman to stop the ceremony. Mr. Balfour, with a sigh, opened his book again, and Mr. Castlerosse looked vainly out for Mr. Lyvett. There was yet time. How was it that Mr. Lyvett had not come? Where was the special train?

How was it, indeed, that Mr. Lyvett had not come? On the previous evening, the family and servants having retired to rest, for it was Mr. Lyvett's safe and good old custom to be up *last* in the house, as it had been his father's before him, he and his wife were preparing to follow them, when Mrs. Lyvett spoke—

"James, I do believe Frederick has not come in!"

"My dear, I told you that Fred went out yesterday for some days."

"Oh, I understood you to say until to-night only. Where is he gone?"

"I did not ask him. He has taken his own course

lately with little reference to me. Somewhere in the country. I expect Charley Castlerosse is with him, for Rowley saw them in a cab together, with a portmanteau or two upon it They are off on some expedition, I suppose. Fred has lately been out of London a good bit: and I am rather glad that it should be so," added Mr. Lyvett, significantly. He had no idea that some one else was also out of it.

He had put out the lights and taken up the bed-candlestick, when a tremendous peal at the hall-bell echoed through the house.

"What can that be?" exclaimed Mrs. Lyvett.

"Some drunken fellows passing. I wish I was behind them." But there followed a second peal louder than the first.

"Don't go down," cried Mrs. Lyvett. "Look from the window." Mr. Lyvett took the advice, opened it, and leaned out.

"Who is that?"

"Is this J. Lyvett, Esquire's?"

"Yes."

"Telegraphic despatch, sir."

"Who from?"

"Don't know."

Mr. Lyvett went down, and returned with the despatch in his hand. He read it by the light of the

bedroom candle, his wife looking over him. Sure such a message was never sent by telegraph before: but Mr. Castlerosse was not collected when he wrote it.

"Fred's down here: going to be married to-morrow at eight o'clock to that serpent-crocodile. Take a special engine and come and stop it. The old affair revived. May, the porter.

"HENRY CASTLEROSSE."

Mr. Lyvett was in a cab the next morning betimes, and had nearly reached the railway-station, prepared to demand a special train, when in putting his hand in his pocket to get the fare ready for the cabman, he discovered, to his consternation, that he had left his purse at home. This was through being over-cautious. He had put the purse out on the drawers the previous night, lest he might forget to change it from one suit of clothes to the other in the hurry of dressing; and on the drawers it was still. He had to drive back; and this delayed him considerably above an hour. The clock was striking eight as he finally drove up to the station. He knew that the train must be then about going out.

"A first-class ticket for Eaton," he breathlessly exclaimed, throwing down a sovereign. "How

much time have I?" he added, as he took up the change.

"None. It is starting now. You can't go by it. The express leaves at ten."

"I must go by it," he said, rushing up to the line of carriages. "Hi! stop! stop! Porter! stop!"

"Too late, sir," said the porter. "Train's on the move."

"Open a door, man! It's a business of life or death. Open a door, I say. Here! all right; never be known."

Something of a golden colour mysteriously found its way into the porter's hand, and a door, quite as mysteriously, flew open. It belonged to a third-class carriage, the last of the train. Mr. Lyvett scrambled into it.

The train steamed up to its destination; that is Mr. Lyvett's destination; steamed well. It was only forty-one minutes past eight when it reached Eaton. He sprang from the carriage.

"This is a first-class ticket," cried the porter, eyeing him suspiciously.

"And if I choose to pay for a first-class carriage and sit in a third, what's that to you? How far is the church off?"

"Half-a-mile."

"Which is the way to it?"

"Out at the back, down the steps, and straight along up the road."

"Any carriage to be had?"

"No. Payne's fly was here, bringing folks to the train, but it's gone again."

Mr. Lyvett rushed madly down the steps. The road was before him, and he could see the church spire rising at a distance, but it looked more like a mile away than half one. How could he get there? What a shame that no conveyance was in waiting! The knot might be tied then, and he arrive just too late. As to running, that was beyond him: it was uphill, and he was a fat man. He espied a horse fastened to the palings of a small house close to the exit: a butcher's boy and his tray had just jumped off it: he was taking the station-master's wife, who lived there, some steak for their dinner. Without consideration, Mr. Lyvett unhooked the bridle, mounted the horse, and urged him to a gallop. The dismayed boy, when he had recovered his astonishment, started in the wake, hallooing, "Stop, thief!" with all his stentorian lungs, which only made the horse fly the faster. About half-way to the church the rider came upon Mr. Castlerosse, sitting philosophically on the top of a milestone by the roadside.

"Well?" cried Mr. Lyvett, pulling up, as speedily as the pace he was going would allow.

"*Well* it is, I think," groaned Mr. Castlerosse. "Why couldn't you come before?"

"Am I in time?"

"No, you are not. They are married and gone. You couldn't expect to be."

"Are they really married?" gasped Mr. Lyvett, his arms dropping powerless with the news.

"They are. I stood in the church and saw it done. I strove to prevent it, but was not allowed. *I* was not his father."

Mr. Lyvett slowly descended from the horse. To encounter the panting and abusive butcher-boy, who protested the policeman was a-coming up with the 'ancuffs. A short explanation and another golden piece settled the lad, and sent him riding off in wild glee.

"You say they are gone. Where?"

"In that train which I suppose you got out of," was poor Mr. Castlerosse's testy reply, as he pointed to the smoking carriages whirling along in the distance. "A more determined, obstinate, pig-headed man than your son has shown himself this day, I never saw. "It will come home to him, as sure as his name's Fred Lyvett."

"As he has made his bed, so he must lie on it," returned Mr. Lyvett, striving to make light of his bitter grief. But not in their worst anticipations

could he and Mr. Castlerosse suspect how very hard that bed was to be.

And meanwhile Frederick Lyvett and his bride were steaming gaily away, having won their stolen march.

CHAPTER XII.

THE COUNTRYWOMAN.

THERE appeared one day before the gate of rather a handsome house, some little distance north of the Regent's Park, a countrywoman carrying a child and a bundle. The moment she was inside the gate, she put the child down, and with a movement that bespoke fatigue, led him to the door and rang—a humble peal.

"I want to see the missis, please," she said to the maid-servant who answered it, her accent a very broad one.

"What for?" inquired the girl, scanning the applicant, who, however, looked far too respectable for one of the begging fraternity. "My mistress is not at liberty to anybody this morning. I can't admit you."

"Then I must sit down with the child on this here step, and wait till she can see me," returned the woman, in a perfectly civil, but determined voice.

"It's not of any use your waiting. This is the day the new people come in, and the rooms are not ready

for them, in consequence of the mistress being called from home last week to stop with her sister, who was taken ill. Me and the cook and missus are all busy, and she can't be interrupted."

"I'm sorry to hinder work," returned the stranger, "but it's your missis's own fault, for changing her house and never telling me. If it's not convenient for me to sit down in the kitchen, I'll wait here; but see her I must, for this is a'most my last day. Perhaps, young woman, you'd be so obleeging as mention that it's Mrs. Thrupp, with little Ran?"

The servant began to think she might be doing wrong to refuse, the more especially as the woman alluded to things which she did not comprehend; and, leaving the visitor standing there, proceeded to inform her mistress. She returned almost immediately.

"You are to walk in," she said; "but my mistress says she does not know anybody of your name."

The countrywoman was shown into a well-furnished parlour, and Mrs. Cooke came to her—a tall, stately widow lady, in a black silk dress that rustled as she walked. She had recently lost her husband, and with him a large portion of her income. Unwilling to vacate her house, which was her own, and by far too large for her reduced means, she had come to the resolution of letting part of it if she could find any friends to come to it. And this she had done.

The countrywoman dropped a curtsy. "I should be glad, mum, if you please, to see the missis."

"I am the mistress," answered Mrs. Cooke.

The stranger looked confounded. She put the child down, whom she had again taken in her arms, telling him to be still: but indeed he seemed to be a quiet, tractable little fellow. Searching in her pocket, she drew forth a piece of paper.

"Be so obleeging as to read it, mum," she said. "That's the direction as they give me, and I'm sure I thought I had come right. If not, perhaps you'd be good enough to direct me, for I'm a'most moithered in this great Lunnon town, and half dead a-carrying of the child. There seems to be no end to the streets and roads and turnings."

"This is my address, certainly," said the lady, looking at the paper. "Who gave it you? What is your business? I have lived here many years. I am Mrs. Cooke."

"The lady I want is not you at all, mum. She is young. They told me she lived here. She used to live there," showing the back of a letter, "and that's where I went after her, yesterday. But the people there said she had left them ever so many weeks back, and had got a house of her own, and they wrote down the address for me. They said, mum, that they only knew it by the man as came for her piano telling

them where he was going to take it to, for she did not tell them herself."

"Now it is explained," said Mrs. Cooke. "The lady you speak of has taken part of my house—Mrs. Lyvett."

"That's not the name," quickly observed the woman.

"Perhaps not the one you knew her by. She is just married."

"Married again, is she! Well, mum, I must see her, if you please."

"She is not here yet. They are in the country, and are coming home to-day."

"That's bad news for me," said the stranger, after a pause. "What time is she expected?"

"It is uncertain. Probably not much before six. They have ordered dinner for that hour."

"Good patience! what am I to do?" exclaimed the woman. "And the ship a-going to sail on Saturday, and not a thing yet got together! Good lady! if you'd let me leave them with you!"

"Leave what?"

"The child and his bundle of things, and a little matter of money I have got to return."

"My good woman," said Mrs. Cooke, "I do not understand you. Leave them for what purpose?"

"To hand over to—what did you please to say her name was now?"

"Mrs. Lyvett."

"Ay, Mrs. Lyvett! I am a rare bad one at minding names. He's a year and nine months old, and we have had the care of him since he was quite an infant. But now, me and my husband have joined the Land Emigrant Society to Sydney, and I can't keep him no longer."

"Whose child is it?" inquired the astonished Mrs. Cooke.

"Well, ma'am, that has never been told to us quite direct. The lady did not say. His father, poor little fellow, was abroad fighting, she said. He have died since."

The woman stopped to wipe her hot face; Mrs. Cooke listened in perplexity.

"A month or more ago," proceeded the woman, "there came a man down to our country, mum; a agent, they called him, of the Foreign Land Society, and he persuaded a many of us to go out; so I wrote to tell the lady of it, and that she must find another place for little Randy. No answer came, mum, and we wrote again, and then we wrote a third time; and still no notice was took. Very ill-convenient it was for me to keep him while we sold off our things and journeyed up here; but what was I to do? We got up yesterday, and I went to the place where she used to live, and found she had moved from there, and had come here."

"I think there must be some mistake," returned Mrs. Cooke, wondering greatly. "I do not believe we can be speaking of the same person."

"Oh yes, we are, mum. Leastways, I should think so. I saw our own letters awaiting there on the mantel-shelf. She ordered the people to keep all letters safe for her till she sent for them."

"What was the lady's name?"

"Mrs. Penryn; the same as the child's. I fancy she is his aunt."

"Then we are speaking of different people. This lady, before she became Mrs. Lyvett, was Miss May."

"It is so, mum. Once, when she got behind in her payments—for it's she that has always paid us for the child, though she has not told us who the parents are—my husband journeyed all the way to Lunnon to see about it. She was going by her maiden name, he found, Miss May: it was more convenient, she explained to him—for her school and music teaching. The payment has been quicker lately, and some that's remaining in hand I have brought back. It's sixteen shillings, mum, which I'd leave, please, with the child."

"You cannot leave the child. It is quite impossible that I can receive so extraordinary a charge. I must decline to interfere. Indeed, I am sorry to have been told this."

"Dear, good lady, pray be merciful! Not a thing can I set about while I'm saddled with this child; and we a-going out o' dock on Saturday. He's such a dreadful weight to carry about, and we be a-stopping all down in Rotherhithe. Mrs. Penryn must take him and give him back to his mother."

"Perhaps he has no mother."

"Oh yes, he has, mum. She sends messages to him in Mrs. Penryn's letters."

Mrs. Cooke considered. She saw that the person before her was, beyond doubt, a decent and honest countrywoman. The story was a very curious one. Mr. Frederick Lyvett's connections were so highly estimable: could it be that the lady he had married was less so? She felt perfectly certain that he did not know of his wife's previous marriage; she knew him very well indeed, and he would be sure to have mentioned it to her. That Miss May was not his equal, and that he had married her against the wish of his family, he had told her freely. If Miss May was indeed Mrs. Penryn, why had she concealed it from him?

"All I can do," she said aloud, "is to allow you to wait here till Mrs. Lyvett comes. You can have some dinner with my servants. But I must request you not to speak of this matter to them, for it would not be prudent."

Early in the afternoon, and before the house was well ready to receive them, the travellers arrived. Frederick Lyvett handed his wife from the carriage, brought her in, introduced her to Mrs. Cooke, and waited while that lady installed them in their apartments. He then hastened away: there was time for him to run down to the office before dinner. Not a single word had Fred heard from his father or mother, or any one connected with him, during his absence. He had written, but his letters obtained no answers.

The servants carried the luggage upstairs, and Mrs. Lyvett cast scrutinizing glances over her new home. The drawing-rooms were handsome enough to satisfy even her; and she was growing tolerably particular. She then went into the bedroom, and told the servants to uncord the boxes. Mrs. Cooke had gone downstairs again. Some instinct had prevented her from speaking of the subject which had troubled her. The better plan, she thought, would be to send the woman up herself.

The servants uncorded the boxes and retreated. Mrs. Lyvett knelt down before one of the trunks, near the bed, and was taking out some of the things, when a knock was heard at the door, and the countrywoman entered. She was leading the boy; who was dressed in a blue cotton frock and pinafore, his light hair dispersed in pretty curls over his little head.

She carried the bundle in her hand, and his hat and cape. Mrs. Lyvett stared in amazement.

"Mum, you have forgot me, I see; but sure you have not forgot your little ward—the child. I be Mrs. Thrupp, from Suffolk. Randy, give your hand to the lady, and hold up your pretty face. Indeed then, mum, I see a likeness in it to yours: we always thought he might be some blood relation."

To describe the startling effect this had upon Mrs. Lyvett would be a difficult task. A spasm seized her face; its colour became livid, as if she were ready for the grave. The child, led up to her by Mrs. Thrupp, held out his hand, but she started from him with a cry of agony.

"Why have you come here? Why have you brought him?" were the first connected words she gasped forth, in a piteous, wailing tone. And the woman explained why: just as she had explained to Mrs. Cooke.

That the lady was shocked, startled, frightened, and in no measured degree, was evident to the country-woman. But in a few moments Mrs. Lyvett's mood changed: anger replaced her fear. Taking a haughty tone, she refused to receive the child. She was not his mother, she said, and did not at present know where his mother was to be found. But Mrs. Thrupp quietly said she should leave him.

Seemingly at her wits' end, and all her hauteur forgotten, Mrs. Lyvett resumed. Entreaties, promises, were in turn resorted to, to induce Mrs. Thrupp to take away the child and keep him; to take him to Australia; to put him out to nurse in London; anywhere, with any one; do with him what she would. Mrs. Thrupp steadily refused to comply. Not, she said, that she did not feel parting with him: she loved him as a child of her own. The boy was frightened, hid his face in his nurse's dress, and cried out aloud. Mrs. Lyvett, rendered uncontrollable by the noise, and hoping to stop it, seized the child and shook him. He screamed out all the louder, for very terror; and she beat him about the ears, and shook him till his breath was gone.

"Good mercy!" muttered the Suffolk woman, as she tore him from Mrs. Lyvett, and folded him in her sheltering arms, "there'll be mischief done next. Why, you have no kindness o' nature about you, mum! It's no fault of his, poor child, that I can't keep him."

"You must take him with you," Mrs. Fred Lyvett continued to urge, but in a subdued voice, as if fearful it should be heard outside. "You must!"

"I have said I cannot," returned the woman; "where's the good o' my repeating it, mum? We have hired ourselves out to do hand-labour over seas,

and it's not possible for me to be encumbered with a child."

"And yet you would encumber me with him!"

"But it's your right to take him, mum. You must know who he is: you've always paid for him. Anyway, I can't carry him with me."

"Put him out in London, then," again frantically urged Mrs. Lyvett. "Find people to take him; I will pay you well. Look here," she added, opening a purse and pouring out the sovereigns with her shaking hands, "you shall have it all. Here's a bank-note as well."

"Mum, I thank ye, but I have not a minute of my own, and we don't know a soul in this big city. My husband will be a'most ready to beat me for the time I'm losing to-day. Money is not of so much value to us now as time: and we be going where they say we shall get plenty. And now I must say good-bye to you, Randy. Lord help ye, child, and raise you up a friend in your need."

She tried to unwind his arms, but the child sobbed and moaned, and clung to her.

"I haven't the heart to do it," she said, the tears dropping from her eyes on his little face. "I'll get him to sleep afore I go, and we'll part that way. There, dear: Randy shall go to sleep with nursey."

She untied the strings of her bonnet, leaned her

face on the little child's, rocked him in her arms, and began a low, chanting sort of ditty. It was her favourite mode of hushing him to sleep; and the boy, exhausted by the recent scene, was soon soothed to it.

"He's as fast as a church now," she whispered. "I suppose I may lay him down on the bed."

Mrs. Lyvett offered no opposition. She sat as one stupefied, opposite to the woman and child, looking at them and biting her lips. Mrs. Thrupp cleared a place on the bed amidst the articles that had been carelessly thrown on it—shawls, paper, cord—turned down the coverlet, gently laid the child on the blanket, kissed him, and covered him up.

"Now, mum, I'll wish you good-day," she said, "and good luck in this world if we should never meet again. But, oh! think better of the hard things you have said, and be kind to little Randy, till you give him up to his own people."

She had left the room, when Mrs. Lyvett, as if a sudden thought struck her, opened the door and called her back again. The woman returned, but somewhat reluctantly, for she was indeed pressed for time.

"You will oblige me," said Mrs. Lyvett—and she was now as calm as the sky in summer—"by going out of this house at once, without exchanging a word with any one."

"And that's what I mean to do, mum. To-day can't be no day of gossiping for me."

"Then go down quietly, so that the household does not hear you, and let yourself out. I wish it. Here is something to drink Randolphe's health on his next birthday," she added, putting a sovereign in her hand.

"Mum, I thank you, and we'll do it heartily. It's in September, you know, and I hope we shall then be nearing the other side. Mum," she added, the tears rising to her eyes, "you will surely be kind to him as long as he stays with you?"

"Of course I shall be kind. But I was put out just now. You ought to have given me notice of bringing him, and then I would have provided for it. There is no accommodation for him here, and I'm sure I don't know how I shall manage with him until his mother comes back to town. I wish you a safe journey."

The woman, obedient to Mrs. Lyvett's wishes, went quietly down the stairs and left the house. The hall-door was somewhat difficult to shut outside, and as she proceeded along the garden path, she turned round, to make sure she had not left it open. Mrs. Cooke was standing at her parlour window, watching her over the short venetian blind. It was a warm, June day, and the window was wide open. Mrs. Thrupp dropped a curtsey.

"I'm obleeged, mum, for your hospitality, and feel

it was kind of you to bestow it on a stranger, such as me."

The lady nodded in reply; and the countrywoman passed out at the gate, just as the clocks were chiming four.

Now we cannot follow the thoughts and acts of Mrs. Lyvett. What really passed in that chamber, after the departure of the woman, was seen by none—by none save herself and Heaven. That she was in a perplexing predicament it would be folly to deny. Any minute between then and six o'clock she might expect her husband home. Naturally he would be surprised at the new inmate—naturally he would say, Whose is the child? Sophia might reply, It is the child of a friend of mine. Who is the friend, and where is she? would be the next question: and she knew her husband quite well enough by this time to make sure he would insist upon the question being satisfactorily answered. Frederick Lyvett might be (as she paid him the compliment to think) rather soft in some matters, but at least he possessed a nice sense of honour, and had the instincts of a gentleman. What if she were not able to find this friend, the mother?—what if she were out of town, as intimated to the countrywoman, and not to be got at? And—putting the poor child aside—in the examination into matters that her husband would inevitably set afloat,

what past inconveniences and episodes might not come to light? Whether she had been married before, or whether she had not been, she had certainly called herself Mrs. Penryn. Who was Mr. Penryn, and where was he?

When she had knelt at the altar by Frederick Lyvett's side, and the officiating minister had adjured her to declare whether there was any impediment to her being wedded in holy matrimony, and to answer as she would answer at the dreadful Day of Judgment, she had held her peace.

What if she now avowed a previous marriage to her husband? Would it avail her? She would have to furnish proofs of it, and of Mr. Penryn's death. And it might be that she could do neither the one nor the other. Alas! alas!

Sitting there opposite the calmly sleeping child, all these thoughts and suggestions passed rapidly through her mind in a wild chaos. We cannot tell how they affected her, what terrible mischief they may have wrought upon her brain.

She had never gone through an hour's agony such as this, she had never been in a strait so fearful. In one sense of the word, she was not altogether inexperienced in these shoals and quicksands of life; for the Caterpillar romances and French novels on which she had been nurtured, and on which her mind

had been formed—if it was formed on anything—abounded in them. That very fact had probably caused her path in later years to be more complicated than its events would otherwise have made it. Quite a repository of resorts, to which the various heroines had been driven to fly from unmerited dilemmas, lay stored in her memory: many and many a time had she, in sympathetic imagination, put herself in their places, and said, I should have done this, or that: and the doing this or that had all seemed very easy! Things appear easy in theory to most of us: but when that theory has to be reduced to practice, they assume an aspect altogether different. Sophia hitherto had revelled in the specious trials of romance; now she was brought face to face with stern reality. She had passed through some straits; but had never encountered one such as this.

She wrung her hands; she would have shed scalding tears but that her burning eyes dried them; she shrank from looking at the little sleeper on the bed. Ever afterwards she believed, honestly believed, that the trouble deprived her of her senses; that she was not, in that dreadful hour, responsible for her actions.

CHAPTER XIII.

A FIT OF SHIVERING.

FREDERICK LYVETT proceeded to the office, and entered his own room. Very much surprised was he to see Mr. Jones (now of some consequence in the house) seated at his desk.

"How are you, Jones?" said he, shaking him by the hand. "What's going on, out of the common?"

"Nothing," replied Mr. Jones. "Why?"

"That you are in this room?"

"That's the governor's doing," said Mr. Jones confidentially, alluding to the head of the firm. "Wish you joy, Fred. How's madam?"

"Quite well. Let me come there."

"I say, it was too bad to steal a march upon us all. 'Twould have been but civil to invite a fellow to the wedding."

"Get out of the way, Jones. I want to come to my place. Pretty cool, I think, your usurping it."

Mr. Jones laughed. "I dare not get out, Fred.

The firm has assigned this place to me, for good and all. I am a member of it now."

"Don't talk to me in that strain."

"It's true. I signed articles yesterday."

Frederick Lyvett looked at him for a few moments, as if unable to take in the information.

"*You signed articles yesterday!* What on earth do you mean?"

"Just that. They have made me a partner. Not to any great extent yet awhile; but still they have made me one of them, and given me a share."

"Is my father in his room?"

"I suppose so. I say, stop a minute. How you whirl yourself off from one!"

"Well?"

Mr. Jones suddenly took his hand, speaking in a low tone. "If they have put you out, and me in, Fred, believe me, it is no fault of mine. I never should have sought to raise myself on your downfall. You will hear more from Mr. Lyvett and James."

Frederick Lyvett went upstairs, and opened the door of his father's private room. The latter waved him away, for a client was sitting there in eager converse. He next looked for his brother James. Mr. James Lyvett was not in. He then went down to the old confidential clerk, Mr. Rowley.

"Rowley, what is all this that's up? Jones has possession of my desk, and says it is by my father's orders."

"Oh, Mr. Frederick, I am as much grieved as if you were my own son," was the old clerk's answer. "I did try to say a word for you to Mr. Lyvett, but he would not hear me. Perhaps time may make things right. I hope and trust it will. You have not seen him?"

"No. Sir Charles Dalrymple is there."

"Sir Charles will not stay long. I know what he wants to-day. Mr. Frederick, I must say a word of counsel to you. It will not be the first I have said, you know."

"Not by a good many," laughed Frederick.

"Your father is very much put out. This has been the worst blow he has ever had. He feels it for you, not for himself——"

"Then he has no need to feel it for me," interrupted Frederick, "for the step I have taken has assured my happiness." But Mr. Rowley held up his finger for silence.

"I would ask you to be prepared for any ebullition of anger, and to bear it without retort," he continued to say. "In his vexation he may use hasty words; but don't you retaliate, Mr. Fred, for that would only make matters worse. When his anger has calmed

down—say in a few months—he may set things again on the old footing for you."

"But Jones is in."

"There's room for you and for him too. The business is large enough. I fancy they always intended to give Jones a small share. See your father, Mr. Fred, and be submissive to him. If—— There goes somebody. Wells!"

"Yes, sir."

"Is that Sir Charles Dalrymple who has gone out?"

"Yes, it is, sir."

"Now's your time, Mr. Frederick, before any one else comes in," resumed old Rowley, in a whisper.

Away tore Frederick up the stairs, a flight at a time, anxious to "stand the firing and get it over."

"The firing" was not that anticipated. Mr. Lyvett said little, and that little calmly. It was apparent that his feeling of anger had merged itself into the deeper one of sorrow. He quietly explained to his son that after the marriage he had made—had persisted in making, in express defiance of his mother's wishes and his own commands—he could no longer remain a member of the high-standing firm of Lyvett, Castlerosse and Lyvett; and that he, Mr. Lyvett, had exercised the power he held in his hands to dissolve

the partnership, so far as his younger son was concerned. But he did not wish to be harsher than the proprieties of the case demanded, Mr. Lyvett continued to say, and a certain sum of money (£6000, being a portion of what Frederick would inherit hereafter) he had caused to be placed to Frederick's account at the banker's. The interest of this would supply household exigencies (the wife he had married could not require refinements or luxuries, not having been reared to them, he added in a parenthesis), and he would recommend Frederick to commence practice on his own account.

Mr. Frederick Lyvett heard his father to an end, and then spoke.

"My marriage," he said, "is an act that concerns only my private life. How can it affect my remaining, or not remaining, in the firm?"

"The person you have married is particularly objectionable to us, Frederick, and you were aware of this. As the daughter of the man and his wife who were our servants for many years in these offices—low, common people with nothing whatever to redeem them from their native sphere—it is impossible that we can ever associate with her. If they gave the girl an accomplished education, though at the best it must have been a superficial one, why, it only served to render her miserable and themselves

ridiculous. There were other and more weighty objections to her, of which I informed you—— "

"They were not true: she disproved them all," eagerly interrupted Frederick.

"*They were true.* But she is now your wife, and I will not again allude to them. Your brother felt—I felt—your mother and sisters felt—Mr. Castlerosse felt—that your giving your name to this person cast a slur upon yourself so great as to render it inexpedient for you to remain a member of this firm; indeed, it could not be permitted. I can only say I hope you will do well, alone. We can, no doubt, put some odds and ends of practice into your hands, and we will do so."

Frederick Lyvett did not answer. He was reflecting on his father's words, revolving the prospect before him.

"Upon one point, Frederick," Mr. Lyvett went on, "we must have a thorough understanding. Upon no pretext must you seek to introduce her to the family. Do not attempt it. It would be derogatory to your mother and sisters and to James's wife. Neither at present nor in future shall we ever submit to know her

"Do you not think you are harsh, sir, in this?" interrupted the son

"No. The fact is, Frederick, our feeling towards her is very, very sore. There's no doubt, though you

may not see it—I hope, indeed, for your sake that you never may—but there is no doubt that she has shamelessly and cunningly played her cards to *draw you in.* While you have thought her all that she appears on the surface; guileless, innocent, inexperienced, generous; she has in reality been hard at work at her crafty game—that of entrapping you—and she has played it out. No; we can never consent to know her. Yourself we will receive. Come and see us whenever you please—your mother wishes it—remembering that your wife's name, and all allusion to her, is an interdicted topic. Come and dine with us to-morrow if you will. This evening we are going out to dinner."

"I will not promise to come," answered Frederick. "Of course, it would cause me great pain to be on estranged terms with you all, and especially with my mother. I think I am treated ill in this affair, but for my mother's sake I will not resent it."

"My boy!" cried Mr. Lyvett, the agitation of his voice betraying that his wounds were sharp just then, "I trust that should children be born to you, they may never bring the grief to you that you have brought home to us."

Frederick Lyvett met the hand that was held out to him and clasped it warmly, gulping down the heart-ache that rose in his throat.

"This estrangement is very bitter, father. I am deeply sorry to have grieved you, but I did not think you would have taken it to heart like this."

"Until you shall be a father yourself, Frederick, and your children grown up, you can never know what this trouble is."

"I shall live but in one hope now, father: that in time you may see reason to be reconciled to my wife, and esteem her. In time."

Frederick went downstairs; the old clerk was looking out for him.

"How have you sped, Mr. Frederick?"

"Sped? Well, not very well. My father has chosen to take it up as—as I never thought he would. And that farce of turning me out! It is to stand."

Mr. Rowley shook his head. "I knew it was to, when they did it. Mr. Lyvett talks to me of most things. Was he very outrageous?"

"Cool and calm. The family don't want to break with me. He asked me to dinner to-morrow."

"That's better than I hoped for," was the hearty response. "Pray go. You will, won't you?"

"No, of course I shall not. A pretty compliment to my wife that would be—to go home to dinner and leave her behind."

"It is the best thing you can do. Conciliation is the chief step at present. much lies in that. *All* lies

in it, for it paves the way for other steps later. You don't know the feuds that time and conciliation have healed. Go, Mr. Fred, go; take old Rowley's advice for once"

"I think I have taken it pretty often. I say, Rowley, just look about for what's mine. Here's the key of the private drawer in the desk Jones has usurped. Put all the things together, and I will send for them. There ought to be a few books of mine somewhere."

And thus Frederick Lyvett was turned out of his father's offices. It was the first unpleasant result of his marriage. If it had only been the last!

Calling a cab, he returned home, arriving there at six o'clock. Dinner was ready to be served, and he hastily went to wash his hands. The bedroom and dressing-room looked in much disorder: things were half in, half out of the trunks, the floor was strewed. Fred Lyvett possessed the bump of order, and the sight jarred on that organ's sensitive nerves. He kissed his wife, so young and fair, and said something about her fatigue. She was in the dress she had worn on the journey; quite a noticeable event, for she was so fond of finery.

"Sophia!" he suddenly exclaimed, as they were beginning dinner, "are you ill?"

She was attempting to eat her fish, but her face

had turned livid, and a fit of trembling seemed to have seized her.

"It is only the fatigue of the journey," she said, her teeth chattering as she spoke. "And I exerted myself, unpacking."

"You should not have attempted to unpack to-day. I see you have been unable to put anything away."

"I felt ill," she murmured.

Frederick Lyvett rose and approached his wife. The very chair shook under her.

"Once or twice before—when I have been much fatigued—I have been attacked—like this," said Mrs. Lyvett, in disjointed sentences.

"Can I bring you anything up, ma'am?" inquired the maid who was in waiting. "Anything warm?" she added, looking on with compassion.

"Yes," cried Mr. Lyvett, hastily seizing on the suggestion, "bring some brandy-and-water. Did the brandy and wine come, that I ordered in?"

"It is placed in your cellar, sir."

"Bring up a tumbler directly. Hot and strong. My dearest Sophia, what can this be?"

"I shall be better soon," she faintly answered.

Mrs. Lyvett drank the brandy-and-water, and became better; but she refused her dinner, and leaned back in an arm-chair while Mr. Lyvett finished his.

After the things had been removed, the servant again appeared at the door.

"Can I speak to you for a moment, if you please, ma'am?"

"To me?" asked Mrs. Lyvett. She rose and approached the door, a nervous movement running through her frame.

The girl pulled the door to behind Mrs. Lyvett before she spoke, but did not close it. "My mistress wished me to ask, ma'am, if we should make some bread-and-milk for the baby's supper?"

"The—baby's—supper?" she stammered.

"Or is there anything else he would like better?"

Mrs. Lyvett made a sudden movement, which brought her back against the door-post. "What baby?" she asked. "What are you talking of?"

The maid looked surprised. "The little boy, ma'am, that the countrywoman brought here."

"The woman took the child away with her," gasped Mrs. Lyvett.

"Took it away—— Oh, then," added the girl, breaking off her sentence, "my mistress must have been mistaken. She thought it was left."

Frederick Lyvett had quick ears. "What was that consultation about a baby, Sophia?" he said, when his wife returned.

Mrs. Lyvett strove to smile, but when her lips were

drawn away from her teeth, she could not get them back again.

"People do make such stupid mistakes," she attempted to say, but at best it was only a low mutter. "A woman who—knew my mother—called here this afternoon—with her baby—and the servant thought she had not gone."

The excuse came to her lips on the moment's impulse. But it is probable that had poor Sophia Lyvett known where, in all the wide world of London, her mother was that day to be found, the great tragedy of her life had never taken place.

The words and the matter passed away from Fred Lyvett's mind. His wife threw herself into the easy-chair again, and he related to her the substance of what passed at the office, suppressing only the stern prohibition as to all *future* intercourse with herself. He strove to make light of it, just as though it were a farce. "They are on the corky system just now, Sophia," he concluded, "but they'll come down. Don't be disheartened."

She urged his acceptance of the following evening's invitation—urged it so strongly, in so agitated and eager a manner, that it turned the scale of his mind in favour of going. He had wished to go. Not only on the score of policy, as the old clerk had urged, but

that it would be terribly painful to himself to be estranged from his family.

"I would have liked to go," he honestly avowed, "but I don't like to leave you alone for a whole evening, Sophia. They dine at seven; I should not get home till ten, or later, for it won't do to run away the minute dinner's over. A disgraced child must be on its good behaviour."

Mrs. Lyvett only pressed it the more urgently. She should be happier alone, knowing he was there, than if he remained away for her gratification.

When they retired to rest, Mr. Lyvett saw that the clothes and packages had been put tolerably straight by the servants. In the middle of the night his wife was taken with a second fit of trembling, so violent that it woke him up in alarm.

CHAPTER XIV.

AN EXPEDITION IN THE DUSK.

MORNING dawned. A beautiful, sunny June day. Mrs. Fred Lyvett seemed pretty well—a bright morning is always inspiriting. She rose and was nearly dressed, when she heard a noise, as of shaking, in the dressing-room. She sprang into it with a gesture of fear. Mr. Lyvett, with some coats on his arm, had hold of the brass knob of one of the closets, and was shaking it to get it open.

"Oh, don't do that!" she uttered, seizing his arm.

"Why, what is the matter?" he inquired, for her face was nothing less than a face of intense terror.

"You may break the lock."

"Sophia, dear, what ails you?" he asked, looking at her attentively. "Break the lock! Not I. And if I did, it need not put you out like this. This is a capital closet. I noticed it when I took the rooms. Lots of brass pegs in it; the very place for my clothes, as I and Mrs. Cooke decided. You will want the

other one and the wardrobe. Where's the key of this closet?" he demanded of the servant, who appeared in answer to his peal at the bell.

"I don't know, sir," she replied. "It was in the door when we made the rooms ready yesterday."

"It is not in it now."

"I have not touched it, sir. I noticed last night that it was out, when I was putting the things straight."

"I must have it," said Mr. Lyvett.

Mrs. Lyvett interrupted. She had been standing with her back to them, one hand pressed on the dressing-table. "Perhaps I took the key out," she said. "I can't quite remember, but I know I was looking into the closet. I will search for it after breakfast."

But, even while she spoke these few words, she had turned her face away again to bury it over a drawer, and they could not see its shivering whiteness.

The maid left the room, and they went in to breakfast. When it was over, Mr. Lyvett rose. "Now, Sophia, this key."

"I will look for it by-and-by."

"But I want it now. I want to arrange my things at once. Otherwise you will be troubling yourself to do it."

"It will be no trouble."

"My dear, I shall do it myself. Be so good as find me the key."

She rose and left the room. But the moment she was in the bedroom, far from searching for the key, she sank down on a chair, wringing her hands; her whole appearance, her face, her attitude, bespeaking a state of wild alarm. Mr. Lyvett suddenly opened the door, and saw her.

"My dear Sophia, what *is* the matter?" A fit of trembling, violent as that of the previous evening, was shaking her now. "What can it possibly be? You must have medical advice. When was it you experienced these seizures before?"

"It is nothing—nothing," she panted. "I did have them some years ago. Frederick——"

"My love?"

"Do not tease me to look just now for the key. I will get it for you by this evening."

"Oh, never mind the key. My things will do any time. Think of yourself. I'll ask Mrs. Cooke to recommend a medical man, and we will have him in at once. She is sure to employ one in the neighbourhood."

He was hastening from the room, but Mrs. Lyvett arrested him by a gesture and a groan—for it could not be called a word.

"Call no one," she murmured. "Let me only be

quiet, and it will pass away. It is an attack of the nerves, brought on by fatigue."

He stood and watched her: and presently she arose, languid but composed. She took his arm, and they went back to the breakfast-room. Two dark circles were round her eyes, and altogether she looked as her husband had never seen her look. He gently put her into the easy-chair, and drew a footstool before her.

"Now I tell you what, Sophia—you must not stir out of that chair all day. And if the trembling comes on again, take some brandy-and-water immediately. It did you good last night. You shall not go travelling again, if this is to be it. Shall I remain at home with you?"

"No, oh no!" she eagerly answered. "You could do me no good. I only want quiet. You know you have a great deal to arrange to-day, and several people to see. Pray do not neglect anything."

"Well, I shall not go home to dine this evening."

"You must go—you shall go!" she exclaimed, with a vehemence that positively startled Mr. Lyvett. "I tell you, Frederick, any worry would only make me worse, and it would worry me dreadfully to know that you neglected this first invitation of your father's. It might render the breach irrevocable."

"Good-bye, then," he said, stooping to take his

farewell. "But I can tell you my going, or not going, depends upon whether you are better. And be sure don't get worrying yourself with the luggage to-day. The things can wait until to-morrow."

Mr. Lyvett passed down the stairs, and as he was crossing the hall, met Mrs. Cooke. He had known her many years. Her son, now dead, had been articled to his father's house. He stopped to shake hands, and they turned into the parlour.

"I am sorry to hear Mrs. Frederick Lyvett is not well," she said.

"Not very. From fatigue of travelling, I believe. She says it will soon pass off. I wish you would go up and see her, Mrs. Cooke. And," he added, dropping his voice to a whisper, "if you think it anything serious, just send for a doctor, and say nothing about it to my wife until he is here."

He took his departure for the day, and in a short time Mrs. Cooke went upstairs. The young wife seemed very well then. She received her landlady haughtily, not to say ungraciously; and spoke in resentful tones of her husband's having thought she needed special inquiry or assistance. Mrs. Cooke perceived the illness was not a welcome topic, and passed to another.

"Did the countrywoman take away the child yesterday?" asked she, in a friendly tone.

"Of course she did," was Mrs. Lyvett's reply, looking steadily at her. And nearly at the same moment she was taken with a fit of coughing, and had to put her handkerchief to her face.

"So Ann brought me word, when I sent up to ask if you would like some food for him; but—I do not know how my sight could so far have deceived me. I saw her go away, and it seemed to me that she had nothing with her. Where he was hidden, will, to me, always be a mystery."

"He was asleep in her arms, under her shawl."

"Well, no, that could hardly be. Both her arms were down. I noticed her hands: she had one brown cotton glove on, and was carrying the other."

"She would scarcely leave her child a present for me," returned Mrs. Lyvett, with a forced laugh.

Mrs. Cooke cleared her throat, and looked another way, speaking hurriedly.

"The woman mentioned to me some particulars, and said she had brought the child to leave him with you. I regret much that she should have spoken, for of course it is no business of mine; but I beg to assure you that I shall never think of mentioning the subject to any one."

"I'm sure I don't know what she said to you," was the answer, delivered in curt, discourteous tones. "And it is of no consequence. She is a woman who

is slightly deranged at times, and is then given to say strange things; but nobody notices her. I have occasionally given her money in charity, and that is what she wanted yesterday. The child is her own, her youngest; but when the mania is upon her, she disowns him."

Mrs. Cooke said good-morning, and betook herself to her own portion of the house. She found much food for reflection that day. Was she to believe the countrywoman's tale, or Mrs. Frederick Lyvett's? She inclined to that of the former, who not only appeared perfectly sane and sensible, but had honesty written on her face; which Mrs. Lyvett had not. Moreover the countrywoman's tale carried probability with it, and bringing back the sixteen shillings, which she said she had been overpaid, corroborated it, as did the little bundle of the child's clothes.

It was a disagreeable matter altogether; at least that was the impression left on Mrs. Cooke's mind; and somewhat mysterious. In the first place Mrs. Cooke could have positively affirmed, if necessary, that the woman had *not* the child when she departed. Carrying it she certainly was not; yet where could it have been hidden? Under her petticoats? No. She was of slender make, and her lavender cotton gown hung flat and scanty, as peasants' gowns generally do hang. Yet it was equally certain that the child had

gone, for Mrs. Lyvett could not have got him hidden in the house. How and when had the child departed? Who had taken him away, if not the woman? And yet, if Mrs. Cooke could trust the evidence of her own sight and senses, the woman had not taken him.

Mrs. Cooke felt intensely mystified. However, as she repeated to herself, it was no business of hers, so she would not wonder any more about it. But the more she strove to follow this resolve, the less was she able to do it. The affair haunted her all day.

Frederick Lyvett came home in his cab to dress. How long that cab and horse would be his, he knew not; he was already making preparations for their sale. He had found a great deal to do all day, what with one thing and another, and apologized to his wife for his long absence, as he stooped to kiss her, and hurried into the dressing-room.

He found the closet open, and his things placed in it. His wife had done it. She appeared to have recovered, and she left her own dinner, just served, to go and talk with him. She begged of him not to leave his family for the sake of hurrying home, saying she would not wish to see him one moment before eleven. He was elated at her being so well, and descended at half-past six to his cab, which had waited for him. Mrs. Lyvett finished her dinner—with a

very poor appetite, as it seemed—and had a cup of coffee brought to her.

The evening went on to dusk. Mrs. Cooke was shut up in her back parlour, which opened to the garden, the servants were in the kitchen, when Sophia Lyvett, wearing a large shawl and carrying something cumbersome, passed down the staircase in the gloom. Slowly and cautiously stole she, as if she dreaded even the creaking of a board, across the hall, whose lamp was not yet lighted, and out at the front-door. She pulled the door to, but did not close it after her, dreading perhaps the noise it would make; sped through the gate, and turned towards the Regent's Park. The road lamp flashed on her face. Its features, as seen through her veil, were white as death, and her mouth opened with every laboured breath she drew.

She bore steadily on her road, but with difficulty, for she was not accustomed to heavy burdens. The road is tolerably lonely there; and every now and then, when not a soul was in sight, she leaned against a dead wall, or a railing, or a stone gate-post, for rest. Once when she was well-nigh exhausted she sat down on a garden step. She had sat a minute when a policeman appeared, coming round the corner she had passed. She sprang up and darted away, helped on by unnatural strength.

She came to the Regent's Park—it was no great

distance—and was entering it, when another policeman appeared, coming from it. She turned short round, and stood back against a dark wall. She knew her way quite well about the locality; for, before settling at Brompton, she had tried this neighbourhood, and had stayed in it for two months, hoping to pick up pupils. The policeman did not see her; he turned off the other way; and, as the echo of his footsteps died away in the distance, she went on again and entered the Park.

When she came out of it her arms were free; what she had carried was no longer in them. Hailing a cab that chanced to be passing, she entered it, giving the driver only a word of direction; that of the road in which Mrs. Cooke's was situated.

"What part of it?" he inquired.

"Drive on. I will tell you when to stop."

She sat in it, panting and breathless, shaking as she had been shaking at home on the previous evening. She let the man drive past her house some slight distance, and then stopped the cab. The fare was very trifling, but she put half-a-crown into his hand, and walked *on*, away still from home. Cabmen, as a whole, are suspicious men, remarkably wide-awake. This one glanced keenly at her face through her veil, and looked after her. Then he turned his horse round, and drove slowly back, looking out for a fare.

When the cab was out of sight, Sophia Lyvett turned and approached her home. No lights were in the drawing-room, so her husband had not returned. That was fortunate: she had not felt perfectly sure that he would not come home early, in spite of her injunction; but another circumstance was less so. The door, which she had hoped to find ajar, as she left it, was closed; and she could not get in unseen, as she had wished to do. The hour she did not know, but thought it might be half-past ten.

What should she do? She scarcely liked to knock and enter, and face the surprise as to her proceedings, at so late an hour. An idea came over her that if she could go in with her husband it would be thought she had but gone out to fetch him. Yes, she would wait, and do that. The shutters of Mrs. Cooke's parlour windows were closed. So much the better; the prying eyes of that lady could not be upon her.

Sophia paced back along the garden path to the gate, and paused there, in the full light of the gas lamp. At that moment a cab drove past. She did not recognize it; but the driver recognized her as the liberal fare he had recently set down. He had met another fare, a cab full, whom he was driving home. He turned round on his box, and noted the house: no fear that he would not know it again.

Another cab came up, a private one, and stopped at

the gate. Mr. Frederick Lyvett's. Fred jumped from it, and his groom drove off immediately.

"Why, Sophia!" he exclaimed, in the very excess of astonishment, as he entered the gate and encountered her. "Is it *you?*"

She laughed. "I put on my great shawl, and came out to walk up and down before the gate, waiting for you. It was hot in-doors, and the night air is pleasant."

But he seemed rather cross: seemed to think the proceeding an extraordinary one; and, while they waited for admittance, recommended her not to do it again. Sophia fancied that the servants stared curiously at her; nothing in the world is so imaginative as conscience. Both the servants were in the hall: the one opened the door to admit them, the other was speaking to her mistress. Mrs. Cooke was sitting in her parlour near the door, which was wide open.

"Good-evening," said Mr. Lyvett, halting to speak. "A warm night, is it not?"

Mrs. Cooke rose and came forward. "Yes; it is very warm. You gave us a fright, Mrs. Frederick Lyvett," she added: and Sophia, who was hastening up the stairs, felt at these words compelled to turn. "When Ann came up to light the hall lamp, she found a beggar boy in the hall; a young man, indeed;

a great, strong, ill-looking fellow. He pretended to ask for bread; but it is a mercy she saw him, or we might all have been attacked in our beds to-night."

"How did he get in?" asked Mr. Lyvett.

"We could not imagine how," said Mrs. Cooke, "until we found Mrs. Lyvett was out. You must have left the door open," she added, looking at the lady. "If you will kindly take the trouble to ring when you are going out, one of the servants will be at hand to show you out, and close the door after you. Perhaps," she continued, smiling, "Mrs. Lyvett is not accustomed to London, and little thinks that the streets and roads are infested with thieves and vagabonds ever on the watch for plunder."

"Oh, Mrs. Lyvett has lived in London all her life," was Fred Lyvett's reply. "Had you much trouble in getting rid of him, Mrs. Cooke?"

"No. I thought it best to conciliate the gentleman, and called the cook to give him some broken victuals. He then asked for old shoes; and I was obliged to threaten him with a policeman before he would quit the house."

"It is the police who are to blame," returned Mr. Lyvett. "What right have they to suffer these fellows to be prowling about the roads at eleven o'clock at night?"

"Oh," said Mrs. Cooke, "it is an hour and a half ago. More, I think."

"I hope you will not be troubled again with such a customer," concluded Fred. "Good-night, ma'am."

His wife had run upstairs, and he followed her. The servant had also gone up with lights. "Sophia," he said, as the girl withdrew, "you must have been out a long while. Where can you have been?"

"Only walking about, watching for you. I told you so."

"Don't go letting yourself out again, my dear, in that odd sort of clandestine way. And at night, too! Ring the servants up, and let them wait upon you. It is different here from that place you were in at Brompton. Mrs. Cooke is a gentlewoman, you know, and accustomed to proper ways. Besides, you are Mrs. Frederick Lyvett now; don't be afraid of giving necessary trouble."

Mrs. Lyvett turned the conversation off. She was very tired, she said, and should go on to her room and undress. Fred nodded, and said he would follow her presently.

She had no further attack of trembling that night. But she tossed and turned from side to side in wakeful restlessness; and, when she did fall asleep, she moaned and started so repeatedly that her husband obtained no rest.

"I am sure," thought he, "that honeymoon journey of ours must have been too much for Sophia! Travelling does upset some people; I suppose she's one of them."

CHAPTER XV.

THE CHILD.

ON the following Monday evening there sat in a room at Rotherhithe a small collection of country people, men and women. A discontented expression was on their faces; and not without cause. They were from Suffolk, intended emigrants to Sydney, who ought to have gone out of dock on the previous Saturday, but from some bad management, which they could not or would not comprehend, the ship was to be detained for another week; and they rebelled at the delay.

"A-boxing of us up in this here wicked London, as is full of accidents and revellings!" cried a woman, who was spelling over a newspaper. "A poor innocent lamb they have been a-drowning of now. A pretty little fellow, with flax-coloured hair, it says."

"Read it out, Goody Giles," said some one of the company.

Goody Giles preferred to relate it. "He were found in a place they call the Regent's Park. A gentleman

were a-passing along, and his dog jumped into the water and fished up a bundle, which they think had lodged on the side, without sinking. They got it out and opened it, and it were a poor little boy."

"When was it? How big was he?" inquired one of the men.

"It were last Friday morning, and he looked to be a-going on of two year," replied Goody Giles. "His frock and pinafore was of blue cotton."

Another woman, seated at the window, turned round her head. "What else do it say?" she asked, in a quick tone.

"Well, I don't mind as it says much else. Tam, take the news, and look."

"Tam" took the newspaper, and ran his eyes over the account. "Yes, it does, mother. It says as there's a reward of £20 offered. And he had got on a shirt and petticoat clumsily marked 'R. P.' in grey worsted."

"Hey, Mrs. Thrupp! what's the matter of you?" cried a man named Miles.

For Mrs. Thrupp had risen from her seat at the window, and stood as if petrified. "Forgive me if I'm wrong!" she breathed, "but it's just the likeness of little Randy."

"Thou foolish woman!" uttered her husband. "Thy thoughts be tied on nought but that little 'un; night and noon. Thee'll get crazy about him shortly."

"Randy wore his blue frock and pinafore the day I left him."

"For the matter of that, Mother Thrupp," interposed Peter Miles, "there be two or three hundred children in blue frocks and pinafores in this town of Lunnon alone."

"And that's the very mark of his shirt and petticoat," persisted Mrs. Thrupp, paying no attention to the rebuke. "I thought his folks might be fashed at seeing no mark, for ladies is particular, and when I were a-mendin' up Thrupp's stockings, ready for the start, I took the needle and worsted, and marked his three shirts and his two petticoats; R, for Randy, and P, for Penryn."

"R. P. is but common letters," interposed Robert Pike, "and stands for many a name. They stands for mine."

"Don't take no note of she, Robin," cried John Thrupp; "her head's turned with losing the little urchin."

Mrs. Thrupp said no more. But she caught up the paper and read the account for herself. She noted the address of the police-station where application might be made, and the body of the child seen. When she was alone with her husband at night, she told him she should go and ask to see it.

"Thee'd never be so soft!"

"I must satisfy myself. Something keeps whispering me that it's little Randy. I told you his mother shook him and hit him, a'most like a dog shaking a rat."

"A pretty figure thee'll cut, a-going to own a drownded child, when thee gets sight on't, and find it's one thee never set eyes on afore!" exclaimed John Thrupp.

"It's only my time and a walk," remonstrated the woman; "and my mind 'll be at rest. While we be kept a-waiting here, we have got nothing to do, now all our things is aboard."

The same evening that these several labourers and their families were conversing together, there appeared at the police-station mentioned in the advertisements a shrewd-looking man, airily attired about the neck and waistcoat. He demanded to see the inspector.

"What for?" inquired an officer in attendance.

"Something touching that child that has been found," was the answer. "If I can't see the inspector now, I'll come again."

"Go in there," said the policeman.

The man went into the room indicated, and stood before the inspector: who heard what his business was, and inquired his name.

"John Ripley."

"Who and what are you?"

"I was well-to-do once, but I got down in the world, and I have lately been reduced to drive a night cab. I tried a day one, but I had to pay sixteen shillings to its master every morning before I took it out, and I could not make it answer. I pay six shillings for the night one."

"Its number, and the owner?" continued the inspector.

John Ripley satisfied him; also in various other particulars relating to himself. Some of his answers were written down.

"And now," said the officer, "what have you to say about this affair?"

"First of all, sir, I want to know whether the reward will be paid to me, if I point out the person who put the child in the water? Because that person," shrewdly argued the man, "may not be the one who actually killed it.'

"If you can indicate to us the individual who put the baby where it was found, and through that information the actual guilty party or parties be discovered and taken, you will be entitled to the reward."

"And receive it?" added the man.

"And receive it," said the inspector, with a checked attempt at a smile. "Now go on."

"Well, sir, last Thursday evening I took out my cab at nine o'clock, and for more than half-an-hour not

a fare did I get. Then one hailed me, and I drove him all up to the Regent's Park, and onwards to the north side beyond it. I set my fare down, and was driving back, when a woman came out of the Park, put up her hand, and made a noise."

"How made a noise?"

"Why, she had tried to speak, but was so out of breath she couldn't, and only a noise came from her. I got down, opened the door, and she scrambled in. I have seen many a one make haste over getting into a cab," continued the speaker, "but I never saw one tumble in as quick as she did. 'Agate Road,' she said to me.

"'What part of it?' I asked.

"'Drive on,' she said. 'I'll tell you when to pull up.' So I did as she told me, and——"

"What time was this?" interrupted the officer.

"I can't say to a few minutes. Between ten and half-past."

"Proceed."

"I drove up the Agate Road; and presently she tapped at the window, and I jumped off and let her out. I thought I should get a shilling from her, but she puts half-a-crown into my hand, and goes away, on further, up the road."

"Is that all?"

"Not quite. I turned back with my cab towards

the Park, plying for a fare, and had not gone far when a gentleman, two ladies, and two children hailed me and got in. *They* told me to drive up the Agate Road, and I did so; when, in passing a house, beyond which I had driven her, I saw the same woman—or lady, whichever she was. She was standing inside its gate, looking up and down the road."

"Well?"

"That is all."

"Did you see more of the woman?"

"No. My last fare went to the very top of the Agate Road; and as they were getting out I took another, who wanted to go in quite a different direction."

"How do you connect all this with the finding of the child?"

"Why, sir, I feel a positive conviction, in my own mind, that it was that very woman who had been placing the baby in the water. She panted and shook as she came from the Park, like one in mortal fright, as I said, and the moment she was inside the cab, huddled herself into one corner of it, like a hare run down. And why should she conceal her house from me, and make me drive past it? She must have had some motive for that."

"These circumstances amount to very little," said the inspector.

"At all events, they look suspicious enough for the police to follow up," quickly retorted the man, "which I suppose you'll do, sir."

The inspector kept his own counsel, as inspectors are sure to do. Neither eye nor lip moved.

"What house was this?" he asked.

"I cannot describe it as you would understand, and I don't know its number; but I can point it out when I'm there."

"How was the woman dressed?"

"In a big, dark shawl which nearly covered her, and a silk dress. And she kept a black veil over her face."

"Should you know her again?"

"I should know her dress; I'm sure I should. It was a grey silk, flounces edged with bands of black velvet. The shawl was a dark plaid, blue and green. I didn't see much of her features."

"What age was she?"

"Young."

"Was she like a lady or a servant?"

"Like a lady."

The inspector wrote for a few minutes.

"Are you always to be found at this address that you have given?"

"Except at night, when I'm out with my cab."

He continued to write.

"Have you talked about this?" he suddenly demanded.

"I have never opened my lips about it till now. It was only to-day, when the account of the finding the child came to my notice in the newspapers, that I began to have my suspicions."

"Good."

The inspector touched a hand-bell, and the policeman came in.

"Begbie."

It was the only word he spoke, but the man appeared to understand; for he withdrew, and another one appeared in plain clothes. The inspector turned to the cabman.

"You will go with this officer," he said, "and point out to him the house you have mentioned. Do not linger before it, or turn your head to look at it; just tell him which it is, and walk past it. You understand?"

"I should be dull if I didn't," returned the driver.

"Mark it," was the inspector's brief direction to his subordinate.

CHAPTER XVI.

AT MRS. COOKE'S.

It is something marvellous—the ways and means employed by the metropolitan police when they are bent upon obtaining information. None know how they do it, or when they do it; excepting to themselves, their inquiries are secret as ever were those of the French inquisition.

By eleven o'clock the following morning the police knew all about the suspected house, what character it bore, and who lived in it. A widow lady of great respectability was its occupant, with her two servants: she had lived there for many years.

About twelve o'clock on that same day a gentleman stood before the house—a tall, well-dressed, middle-aged, easy-mannered man. He knocked and rang, as though he felt himself to be some one of consequence. One of the maids opened the door.

"Is Mrs. Cooke at home?"

"Yes, sir."

Without ceremony or any kind of invitation, he walked at once into the hall.

"I wish to see her."

"What name, sir?" asked the servant, preparing to show him in.

"Mr. Smith."

Whether Smith was his real name, or not, is no matter to us. It did for the servant, as well as any other. Mrs. Cooke was seated in her parlour; a handsome, well-appointed room. Mr. Smith saw a tall stately lady, dressed in rich black silk and a widow's cap. She was looking over some account-books, but rose at the visitor's entrance and laid down her spectacles. Amongst her friends was a gentleman named Smith, and she advanced to shake hands, but drew back at meeting a stranger.

"Ma'am," he began, in a low, cautious tone, as soon as the door was closed, drawing, unasked, a chair near to hers, and sitting down, "I have come to seek a little private information from you. I am a member of the detective police."

Mrs. Cooke was shocked and startled. A detective officer had always been associated, in her mind, with a blunderbuss and two horse-pistols. She nervously began to draw on her black lace mittens, which lay on the table, but her trembling fingers could hardly accomplish it.

"Don't be alarmed, ma'am," he said, with a voice and smile tending to reassure her. "My visit has nothing formidable in it. Look upon me as an acquaintance only, who has called to sit half-an-hour with you."

"Sir," she answered, "I have lived to six-and-fifty years, and never had anything to do with the police in my life, or my husband either. He was in Somerset House, and I can assure you we never did anything to bring the notice of the police upon us. All we have ever done, or said, might be laid open to the world."

"Had *you* fallen under their mark, I should not come to visit you in this private manner," was his composed reply "I only require a little information from you; which I think you can afford me."

"Dear me!" groaned Mrs. Cooke.

"Do you live in this house alone with your two servants?"

"Until last week I did. I suppose, sir, I am compelled to answer your questions?"

"Madam, yes. Or you may be called upon to answer them in public: which would be less pleasant to you. Since last week, who has resided in your house?"

The intimation did not tend to reassure Mrs. Cooke. But never a thought crossed her of refusing to answer, and she resigned herself to the situation.

"A newly-married gentleman and his wife came to reside with me last week. My house is large for me since my husband died, and they have taken part of it. They entered last Wednesday."

"Respectable people, I conclude?"

"Respectable! Sir, it is Mr. Frederick Lyvett, a son of the great Lawyer Lyvett; their firm is one of the highest in London. The Lyvetts live in great style at the West-End."

"I know them," nodded the officer. "Lyvett, Castlerosse, and Lyvett. Just married, are these parties?"

"About a fortnight ago."

"Who was the lady?"

"I know very little of her. I believe she was inferior in position to Frederick Lyvett, and his friends were against the match. She was a Miss May, and resided somewhere in Brompton. But, sir," added Mrs. Cooke, while the stranger was making a note of her last words, "I feel there is something mean and dishonourable in thus giving information of the affairs of other people. It is what I have not been accustomed to do."

"Nevertheless, it is necessary," he answered, in a semi-impatient but very decisive tone, as if ignoring the scruples. "They came in on Wednesday afternoon. Did they bring any children with them?"

"Oh dear no. I said they were just married."

"Did any children, or child, come to visit them that day or the next? Any young boy—say two years old, or approaching to it?"

What doubt, what feeling came over Mrs. Cooke at this question, perhaps she could not herself have explained. She did not answer it, but her face grew white, and she sat gazing at the officer. Did the account she had read of the little child in blue who was found in the Regent's Park arise unaccountably before her? He drew his chair closer and his voice took a sound of confidence.

"Mrs Cooke," he said, "by the expression of your face, I think you now begin to suspect the drift of my questions. A sad deed has been committed by some one, and certain facts which have come to our knowledge would seem to point to a suspicion that an inmate of your house may have been connected with it. It is your duty to throw upon this matter any and every light that may be in your power; and the law will demand it of you."

"What deed is it?" ejaculated Mrs. Cooke.

"I ask if you saw any child here with your lodgers?" he continued, passing by her question. "Did you see any child with them?"

"A woman, evidently a countrywoman, saying she was from Suffolk, did bring a child here on the

Wednesday, an hour or two before they came home," replied Mrs. Cooke, unmistakably much pained at vouchsafing information, yet afraid to withhold it.

"Yes. Well, ma'am? Pray proceed."

"She said the child was one that Mrs. Lyvett had placed at nurse with her, but she could no longer keep it, because she and her husband were going out to Australia. Sir, suppose I decline to furnish these particulars—to answer these questions? Have you the power to compel me?"

"Yes, madam. At a police-court, before a magistrate."

The alternative was not palatable, and Mrs. Cooke resigned herself to her fate without further struggle. "The woman wanted to leave the child in my charge," she continued.

"Did you take it?"

"Of course not. I allowed the woman to wait here until they arrived, and she then carried the child upstairs to Mrs. Lyvett."

"Was Mr. Lyvett there?"

"He was gone out. The woman stayed with Mrs. Lyvett in her bedroom, and we heard the child crying. Afterwards, one of my servants, in passing the rooms, heard the woman hushing him to sleep. After that, the woman left the house."

"How long was she with Mrs. Lyvett?"

"About—I should think, three-quarters of an hour. Nearly that."

"And what became of the child?"

"I don't know. I wondered what did become of him; for when the woman left I saw no child with her. I asked Mrs. Lyvett about him the following morning, and she replied that the woman had taken him with her. She had said the same thing the night before to one of my maids, who went up to ask whether anything should be prepared for the baby's supper. It surprised me very much; for though I saw the woman leave, I did not see the child. Still, I supposed that it must have been so, for we certainly neither saw nor heard traces of the child after her departure."

"Neither saw nor *heard* any?" repeated the officer.

"None whatever."

"Did you chance to hear the woman's name?"

"She told me it was Thrupp."

"Now, madam, bring your thoughts to bear, if you please, on the following evening, Thursday. Did Mr. and Mrs. Lyvett dine at home? I presume their dinner-hour is late?"

"Six o'clock. Only Mrs. Lyvett dined on Thursday evening. Mr. Frederick went to his father's to dine."

"She was alone, then?"

"Yes."

The officer stopped for a minute, considering. When he resumed, the tone of his voice was low and grave, as if conscious that he was asking a grave question.

"Did you happen to know whether Mrs. Frederick Lyvett went out that night?"

Mrs. Cooke hesitated. She would have given all the world to avoid this.

"Madam," said the officer, somewhat sternly, "you *must* speak, and speak freely."

"Mrs. Lyvett did go out. She went out without any one's knowing it, and left the hall-door open. By which means a tramp got inside the house and startled us."

"At what hour did she go out?"

"It is impossible to say precisely. The servant fetched down her coffee-cup before nine, and it was between half-past nine and ten when we found the tramp in the hall."

"What time did she return?"

"She returned with her husband. It was getting on for eleven."

"With her husband?" he repeated quickly, and possibly in surprise, only that the tone of a wary police-officer rarely betrays any.

"Yes, with her husband. I was sitting here and heard his cab stop. They came in together."

"They may have met at the gate," mused the inspector to himself. "Did you observe how she was dressed, madam?"

"Not particularly. Except that she wore a very large, dark shawl, which I thought she must be smothered in, so hot a night."

"And a veil?"

"Yes; for she kept it down. Mr. Lyvett stopped to say good-evening, as they passed this door, and I spoke to Mrs. Lyvett about the beggar, and requested her in future to ring for a servant to show her out."

The detective looked over his note-book. "I have forgotten one question in its order," he said. "What clothes did the child wear?"

Mrs. Cooke's voice sank to a whisper. "When his cape was off, I saw he wore a blue frock and pinafore."

"Did you perceive anything strange in Mrs. Lyvett's manner between Wednesday, when the country-woman was here, and Thursday evening?"

"Nothing strange. She had an attack of illness once or twice, which was attributed to the fatigue of travelling."

"What sort of illness?"

"Ann, who saw her, said she shook worse than one with ague, and had a cold, white look."

The officer coughed a peculiar cough. "The rooms

they occupy were open, I suppose, to your servants on the Wednesday and Thursday?"

"Quite so. As they are now. It is Ann only who waits on them."

"Is Ann a discreet girl?"

"Discreet, sir! In what way discreet?"

"Can she keep a silent tongue?"

"I think she can. She is a very good girl."

"Allow me to ring for her," he said. And without waiting for permission, he rose and rang the bell.

Ann herself answered it, and stood with the door in her hand.

"Come in," said Mrs. Cooke, and the officer rose and closed the door behind her. She looked surprised, half-frightened; a short, pale, quiet-mannered young woman. "Ann," began her mistress, "this gentleman wishes to ask you a question or two. Be particular in replying."

She turned to face the stranger, who looked at her keenly as he entered on his inquiries.

"You wait upon Mr. and Mrs. Lyvett, I am informed by your mistress."

"Yes, sir."

"Make beds, sweep rooms, and such work?"

"Yes, sir."

"Last Wednesday, after they came here, and the day following, were the rooms quite open to you?"

"Open, sir?" repeated the girl, as if she scarcely understood the question. "Yes, they were open."

"You saw nothing to induce you to suppose anything was lying hidden—any bundle, for example?"

"I never thought anything about it, sir," was Ann's answer, wondering to herself what the drift of all this was. "There was nothing hid that I noticed."

"Closets, cupboards, were all open?"

"Yes, I think so—except one closet," added the servant, carelessly, as if she thought that of little consequence. "The key of it was mislaid."

"Ah!" remarked the officer, briskly, a keen look of intelligence rising to his countenance and fading again. "When was that?"

"On the Wednesday evening, sir. I was going to hang the dresses up which the lady had left about, and I could not find the key of the closet, the one in the dressing-room, where the pegs are. It was locked, and the key gone."

"Did you ask for the key?"

"No, sir; on the following morning, Mr. Lyvett rang the bell and asked me for it. And then the lady said she might have taken it out unintentionally and had put it somewhere. She would look and see after breakfast, she said, and I came down again."

"Did she speak readily?—at once?"

"No. Not till Mr. Lyvett pressed for the key, and

seemed displeased, telling me I must find it. He seemed to think that I must have taken it out."

"Was that closet open, do you remember, during the day, Thursday?"

"I am sure it was not open, sir, when I made the bed. It may have been when I put the rooms straight at night, but I did not notice. The next morning I saw it was open, and Mr. Lyvott's things were placed in it."

"Mrs. Lyvott was ill on one, or both of these days. What was the matter with her?"

"She said she was tired with the railway journey. She shook a good deal."

"Did she look terrified?"

"Well, she did, sir," was the servant's reply. "At least, so it struck me."

The officer asked a few further questions, but she could say no more of importance. He rose from his chair, drew up his form to its full height, and placed his hands upon her shoulders.

"Now, my girl, do you know what I am? I am an officer in the detective police force, and you have been under private examination. You must observe strict silence as to what has passed in this room, to your fellow-servant and to every one else. Shall I swear you to it?"

The girl gasped, and looked for help to her mistress.

He saw his end was gained. Little need to swear her, even had he seriously meant it.

A few minutes longer with Mrs. Cooke, whom he left with a pale, distressed, uneasy face, and the officer went straight back to the station. There he found a countrywoman waiting. She also had come about the matter—a Suffolk woman, who gave her name as Thrupp, and said she had nursed a child whom she fancied answered to the description of the one in the advertisement—could she see it?

Yes; she was taken to see it. It was lying in its little blue clothes, just as it was found. The woman gave one look, and fell into a passion of grief upon the board. It was indeed the same child. Mr. Smith waited until her grief had spent itself, and then took her away and inquired particulars. Mrs. Thrupp gave them willingly and eagerly, telling all she knew. Mr. Smith listened, and made notes.

"You don't know the mother of this little child, you say?"

"We was never told, sir, who his mother was. The lady was in a fine way with me for bringing him up to Lunnon unexpected, as she called it, and said, what was she to do with him till his mother came back to town? She offered me money to take him with me in the ship, or to get him a place to be at in Lunnon—a handful o' gold she showed me. But I told her

how it was with me—that I was put to it myself for time to get things ready for the start; and I left him there with his little bundle o' clothes."

"He was alive then—when you left him?"

"Alive, sir! Bless him, he was alive, and sleeping sweetly on the grand high bed where I laid him. The tears were wet on his cheeks, though, for the lady had been in a fierce temper with him; but he'd have forgot it all when he awoke."

"Mrs. Lyvett was in a temper, was she?"

"Yes, sir, she seemed sadly put out at my taking him back. Like enough, sir, she have a good temper in general; but the best o' tempers gets ruffled at times."

"I must inform you of one thing," said the officer, as a parting word. "You are not the first in the field—as to the reward."

"Ay," she mused, "I do mind me that the news-sheet spoke of a reward. What did you please to say, sir?"

"Another has been here before you, and given information which led us on the same scent, so that the reward will be his, not yours."

"The reward mine!" uttered the poor woman, aghast. "Sir, do you think I would touch a reward for telling out about the killing of little Randy? No, never! Let them take it that has got heart

to do it, but it shall never trouble me nor my husband."

The officer had done with Mrs. Thrupp for the present; she was at liberty to return to Rotherhithe. But the same day she and her husband received an intimation that they could not sail for Australia in the vessel about to quit the docks on Saturday: they must wait for a later one. The delay, however, would not be at their own cost.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE APPREHENSION.

THE morning above spoken of is not yet done with or the day either. Ann, Mrs. Cooke's housemaid, allowed Mr Smith to show himself out of the house. The girl had retreated to the kitchen, and was leaning against the ironing-board, not quite sure whether she stood on her head or her heels. Her faculties were in a state of utter confusion: it would have been something could she have unburthened herself to her fellow-servant, at that moment making a tart on the table; but the relief was denied her.

"Be you asleep?" suddenly demanded the tart-maker. "Because that was the drawing-room bell that rang."

Ann started from her reverie, and ran upstairs to answer it. Mrs. Lyvett had sat down to the piano and was trying some new music. Ann was kept waiting her pleasure for some minutes, door-handle in hand. That was just Mrs. Sophia Lyvett's way.

"Oh," she said when she condescended to turn

round, "in ordering dinner I forgot to say that we shall want it earlier than usual"

"At what time would you like it, ma'am?"

"Five o'clock. Who was that gentleman?" carelessly added Mrs. Lyvett, striking a few notes as she spoke, and keeping her face turned on the music.

"Gentleman?" faltered Ann.

"The one who has just been here. He paid a pretty long visit."

"It was—it was a gentleman to see my mistress, ma'am," replied Ann, making the best answer she could, and intensely wondering that Mrs. Lyvett should chance to speak on that one subject.

"To see your mistress! What was his business with her?"

"I don't know, I'm sure, ma'am."

"Oh, it is of no consequence. I saw him come in at the gate, and fancied I knew him—that's all. Dinner at five, mind."

Now in reality Mrs. Lyvett had not fancied that she knew the gentleman; but her mind was in a very uneasy state just then, and she suspected an enemy in every bush. Looking from the window, she had seen the stranger come in, and she watched for his going away, restlessly marvelling all the while what it was he wanted.

They were going that night to one of the theatres.

Frederick Lyvett had engaged a box the previous day, bringing the tickets home as a little surprise for his wife.

The day wore on. In the afternoon Mrs. Lyvett went out. She did a little shopping, bought a shell wreath for the hair—shell wreaths were then in fashion—bought a few other pretty trinkets which took her fancy, ordered home some fine fruit, regardless of the cost, set down her name as a subscriber to a new and expensive work just coming out, and also became a first-class subscriber to one of the large circulating libraries, which had a depôt in the neighbourhood, paying for the year in advance: five guineas. She seemed determined to make use of her husband's money. She told them she should want books changed every day, and they must hold themselves in readiness to send to her as often as she required. She looked out six or eight volumes to take with her then, had a cab called, and went home in it.

It was then nearly half-past four. Sophia hurried into her bedroom, intending to dress for the theatre before dinner, sat down to the glass and did her hair, placing in it the ornamental flowers she had bought, and then rang for Ann to help her with her gown. Frederick Lyvett came home and dressed also. They kept dinner waiting. It was nearly half-past five when they sat down to it.

When the cloth was removed, Ann placed the wine

on the table, then ran downstairs to fetch up the coffee which had been ordered. She placed the waiter, with the two cups and the silver coffee-pot, before Mrs. Lyvett.

"And now, Ann," Mr. Lyvett said, "you must go to the stand for a cab. Choose a nice one."

The servant did as she was ordered: went to the stand, chose a cab, and returned in it. As she got out of it a gentleman came up to the gate. Ann recognized him as the one who had given her such a fright in the morning—Mr. Smith. His dress was altered, and he had now an official look. Two policemen were sauntering up behind: the girl thought they belonged to him, and her heart leapt into her mouth with alarm.

"For whom have you fetched that cab?" he inquired.

"For Mr. and Mrs. Lyvett, sir," she answered, in a tremor "They are going to the theatre."

"Good. We may want it. Consider yourself engaged to me, my man."

The driver touched his hat, and looked on with curiosity. He also had noticed the policemen, and knew they were not on ordinary duty. a cabman's instinct is sharp on these points. Ann flew up the path to the door, which she opened with her latch-key. It crossed her mind to lock and bar it against

those dreaded officers: but she did not dare to do it. She held it open for Mr. Smith to enter: it was only he who had as yet passed in at the gate. What could his business be, thought Ann, in a flutter: but she had a vague consciousness that it related to Mr. or Mrs. Lyvett.

"Don't shut the door," said Mr. Smith to her. "Leave it on the latch."

Mrs. Cooke had seen the officer's approach from her parlour window; the cook, who happened to look up from the kitchen area, saw it also; the former came out of her room, and the latter came peeping up the stairs. Ann had observed "silence" according to orders; but it was beyond human nature not to be a little mysterious as to the visit of the gentleman in the morning, and the other servant's curiosity had been aroused in regard to him.

"Mr. and Mrs. Lyvett are in their sitting-room, I believe, madam?" he remarked to Mrs. Cooke, who had stepped forward to meet him in the hall.

"Yes," she answered, her hands working nervously one over the other. "I believe they are."

He turned to Ann. "Step up and announce me: Mr. Smith. I'll follow you."

"Oh, sir—if you please—*must* I do it?" she stammered, with a white face and chattering teeth: for she had now become thoroughly frightened.

He looked at her. "No. You would do more harm than good. I will announce myself."

He went softly up the stairs as he spoke, and the three frightened women clung to the balustrades and gazed after him. Suddenly the cook caught hold of her mistress, and gave a smothered cry. Standing against the wall by the hall-door were the two policemen, who had quietly entered.

Mr. Lyvett was still in his place at table. Mrs. Lyvett had drawn away from it, and leaned back in an easy-chair. The detective glanced at her with a detective's critical eye. He saw a handsome young woman in a rich evening dress, gold ornaments on her fair neck and arms, and the braids of her fair hair interspersed with a wreath of white flowers.

Mr. Lyvett rose in surprise As well he might, to see a stranger walk coolly in, and close the door after him. His first impression was, that some friend of Mrs. Cooke's had entered their room by mistake. But he was abruptly undeceived.

"I am deeply grieved to come here on my present errand," said the officer, "and apologize for the intrusion; but the law knows no favour. My business is with this lady."

"What business?" haughtily demanded Frederick Lyvett.

"I am sorry to say I have a warrant for her apprehension."

"What do you mean?" broke from Mr. Lyvett, after a pause of consternation. "This lady is my wife"

"I know it. And I can only say I hope that things, which at present look—look dark, may be satisfactorily cleared up, so that Mrs. Frederick Lyvett may be restored to her friends."

Frederick Lyvett, his mind in a state of confusion, spoke a few passionate words. How dared an insolent policeman invade his house—how dared he insult Mrs. Lyvett? Their purport was something to that effect.

"I am not an ordinary policeman, Mr. Lyvett," was the calm answer. "There is my card: you will see what I am. I have the pleasure of being acquainted with your father and Mr. Castlerosse: not that they have any knowledge of the present matter: and I came here myself this evening, instead of despatching my subordinates, that this arrest—which *must* be made, understand me—should be accomplished with as little offence to your feelings as is possible."

The officer's address and manner were so business-like and temperate, that Frederick Lyvett insensibly calmed down. A sudden thought occurred to him.

"Should my wife, as Miss May, have contracted a debt, or debts," he said, "your recourse will be against me now: not against her."

"It is not an affair of debt," answered the detective. "I wish it was. The warrant sets forth a criminal charge."

"Nonsense!" contemptuously rejoined Mr. Lyvett, when he had taken in the sense of the words. "Criminal charge! I tell you, that you must be labouring under some extraordinary delusion. You have mistaken my wife for somebody else."

The officer drew a paper from his pocket, and opened it. "The warrant," he said, "is against Sophia Lyvett, otherwise May, otherwise Penryn."

Mr. Lyvett, somewhat staggered, turned his eyes on his wife, as she cowered in her chair. He never saw a countenance express so much horror. It was perfectly livid. And the dark circles which he had observed round her eyes once before, but some three or four days ago, had reappeared.

"Come, madam," said the officer, "the quicker these things are concluded, the less pain they bring. I pledge you my word that all shall be done as considerately as possible. No one shall go inside the cab but myself, unless you wish your husband to go. Allow me to ring for a shawl, or cloak."

"I will never go with you," she gasped, whilst her husband stood spell-bound. "I dare you to arrest me."

"Madam, you are already arrested, and it will be well to accompany me quietly. I have policemen at

hand, but I do not wish to call for their aid, unles you compel me."

She made a movement to rise, probably in resistanc but sank back again, motionless and breathless.

"You have killed her!" exclaimed Frederick Lyvett in agitation, quite beside himself with a most horribl perplexity. It was his wife's aspect that confounded him: if ever a face and manner spoke of consciou dread, hers did. But he thought still it must be some preposterous error.

"How dare you come here with your wicked and absurd tales, sir?" he demanded. "Help! help!" he added, ringing the bell.

"Hush-ssh!" quickly interrupted the officer. "Pray don't get the room full; for her sake; for yours. Raise her head up. Only a little water," he called out, darting to the door, and looking down the well of the staircase. "*One* of you can bring it up."

It was Mrs. Cooke who entered with it, either from a feeling of curiosity or the more considerate one of shielding Mrs. Lyvett from the gaze of servants. Mr. Smith nodded in approval, and closed the door the instant she was in the room.

"A pretty disgraceful business this is," exclaimed Mr. Frederick Lyvett to her. "That police-officers should be permitted to enter houses as they please——"

"I would have given any money, Mr. Lyvett, rather

than it should have happened here," she interrupted. "It will be a stain upon my house for ever."

The words—nay, it was the tone, rather than the words — struck oddly upon the confused mind of Frederick Lyvett.

"What is it you accuse my wife of?" he asked, turning to the officer.

"The charge is that of—— "

"What?" cried Frederick Lyvett; for the concluding word was spoken in so low a key that he did not catch it.

"Yes," said the man, repeating it in his ear. "That is the charge, Mr. Lyvett. I do not, you understand, take upon myself to say it can be substantiated."

The poor young husband staggered back to the seat opposite his wife, his lips as blanched as her own.

"What does it all mean?" he gasped.

"Well," returned the officer, willing to spare his feelings, "the accusing circumstances are not pleasant. I would not advise you to inquire into them to-night, Mr. Lyvett."

"But I will inquire into them—ay, and refute them," retorted Fred Lyvett. "It is wild—preposterous. Why don't you arrest me for high treason? —or for housebreaking?—it would be as much in accordance with probability."

Mr. Smith came to the conclusion that, to avoid

further trouble, it might be better, after all, to whisper a few details to the young man; and he took him aside for the purpose.

Frederick Lyvett turned hot and cold as he listened, and passed his handkerchief nervously over his brow; for, even while the officer spoke, certain little matters connected with the previous Wednesday evening rose up in his memory, and they seemed to confirm the tale. The colloquy between his wife and the maid outside the drawing-room door: and then those unaccountable shivering fits! But he would not give in one inch; and, indeed, his mind was in so bewildered a state that he did not comprehend half that was said to him.

"Who would be likely to bring a child here, and leave it with my wife?" he demanded. "I should think Mrs. Cooke can refute that."

"On the contrary, I fear Mrs. Cooke can confirm it," spoke the officer, with suavity. "Madam, I must beg of you to speak."

Mrs. Cooke turned round her distressed face. She was bending over the unhappy wife, who lay back in her chair, apparently in a state of semi-consciousness.

"I am very, very sorry to be obliged to confirm it," she said. "I would give half I am worth not to be able to do it. When you arrived here on Wednesday, Mr. Frederick Lyvett, the woman was waiting with the child."

"Whose child was it?"

"Sir, I only know what the woman said. I think it is very cruel that I should be obliged to relate this."

"Madam," interposed Mr. Smith, "you must see that there is no help for it."

"There is none," added the young man, in his excitement. "What did the woman tell you?"

"The woman did not precisely know whose child it was—she had never been told, she said. But she believed it to be a Mrs. Penryn's—a relation of your wife's."

Frederick Lyvett looked from one to the other in perplexity, and his face grew suddenly hot Mr. Smith had just whispered to him that Miss May had occasionally given her name as Mrs Penryn. Still he did not comprehend the details that were being told to him.

"If the woman did bring a child here, she must have taken it away again."

"Well, no," said Mrs. Cooke. "I—I believe she did not."

"Go on. Tell *all*," wailed Frederick Lyvett. "Whether the tale be true or false, it must be grappled with."

"When the woman came downstairs from her interview with your wife, Mr. Lyvett, and left the house, I spoke to her from my sitting-room window. So

far as I saw, she had certainly not the child with her, and I assumed that it was left with Mrs. Lyvett. After your dinner, I sent Ann up to ask whether she should make the baby some food. Mrs. Lyvett's answer was that the child had left with the woman. It surprised me very much; for I thought I could have taken upon myself to say most positively that the child did not leave with the woman; that it had remained upstairs, and was still in the house then."

"And—where was the child?" asked Mr. Lyvett.

"That is the chief point," said the officer, for Mrs. Cooke seemed determined not to reply. "The child appears to have been brought into this house, and never to have left it—alive. The woman tells me—I saw her this morning—that she got it to sleep, and placed it on Mrs. Lyvett's bed. When next seen it was in the park, dead."

The face of Frederick Lyvett was distressing to look upon. Bit by bit, the story was gaining upon him. In her compassion for him, Mrs. Cooke strove to say a few words—ideas that had occurred to herself—in exculpation of the unhappy wife. And it was very probable that she hit upon the truth.

"Mrs. Lyvett was evidently very ill that evening, as you must remember, sir; and I think—I do think—she might not have been accountable for her actions. It is possible that in a moment of temptation—of

embarrassment—having a child, she perhaps knew not how to account to you for, thus thrown upon her hands——"

Frederick Lyvett shook his head. "No child could have been here a night and a day without my knowing it, as you"—turning to the officer—"wish to make out that this one was."

"Alive, probably not," was the answer. "A dead child could be concealed anywhere. Say in a cupboard—or closet"

The tone was significant. Recollection flashed over Frederick Lyvett of the disappearance of the closet key, and his wife's agitation when he inquired for it.

Not much less agitated was he now. Point after point seemed clearing itself terribly to his mind; objection after objection seemed to slip from his hands.

"But the child you speak of was found in the Regent's Park, not here," said he, still somewhat bewildered.

"I suppose it was carried there"—and Mr. Smith coughed as he spoke. "A cab-driver has testified that he took a lady up at the park gate on Thursday night, and brought her up this way. She appeared to be agitated, he says; and—and in short, it has been proved that the lady was your wife, sir."

Frederick Lyvett suppressed a groan. Had he not seen her outside in that large, hot shawl, when he

drove up from dining with his father?—and had he not gathered that she had been out for a considerable time? Hope did in truth seem to be slipping totally away from him, and he resigned himself to what must be.

Poor Sophia Lyvett, more dead than alive herself, was made ready for her departure, Mrs. Cooke assisting to change her gala robes for a dress more suitable. Thus she was conveyed to a place of detention for the night; Mr. Smith entirely declining to comply with the request urged upon him, that she should be allowed to stay where she was until the morning. He and her husband went inside the cab with her as far as the doors, one of the policemen sitting with the driver.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AT HOME.

MRS. LYVETT was at home alone. Her husband had gone out to dinner that evening, her daughters were at their brother James's. She sat at the drawing-room window in the twilight, looking rather abstractedly down on the lighted square below. Some entertainment appeared to be taking place at one of the houses close by, for the carriages were bowling up quickly.

A small, pale gentlewoman, Mrs. Lyvett looked younger than her years; she had been taken more than once for her big son James's sister. She wore a cool muslin gown, its loose sleeve falling from her slender wrist, as her right hand was raised to support her cheek, which pushed back her light hair.

In her blue eyes there was quite a touching look of sadness, and she sighed repeatedly. For the past two or three weeks her musings had been all sad. Of all her children, boys and girls, the youngest, Frederick, had been the dearest to her: she had

fondly believed him the one most implicitly obedient and dutiful, and yet he had gone in direct opposition to her, to his father, to them all, and made that low marriage! It came upon her as a blow, and had left her with a perpetual heartache.

It was not so much the unsuitability of the connection for Frederick that distressed her; it was the girl herself. Had Sophia May been everything that was desirable, why, the fond mother mentally whispered, they would have looked over her birth and rearing. At least, *she* would; yes, and she believed that her husband would also in time. In time. But from all that Mrs. Lyvett had heard of Sophia May, she judged her to be eminently unsuitable to be the wife of an unsuspicious, honourable young man. She had never seen Sophia May, but she had heard of her from her husband and Mr. Castlerosse and James. She knew of the ridiculously absurd way in which she had been reared; of her airs and graces; of the concocted letters and recommendations by which she had obtained entrance to Lady Tennygal's household, as governess, and of her being turned from thence on the discovery of the fraud.

All this (Mrs. Lyvett knew of nothing worse) was sufficient to render her the kind of woman especially to be avoided as a wife. But Frederick had married

her, and Mrs. Lyvett felt for him to her heart's core. It seemed to her that the girl was not calculated to make him happy, and that he would probably live a whole life of repentance—and these things try a mother. Mrs. Lyvett was feeling it all very especially and bitterly this evening, she knew not why. Sigh after sigh burst from her.

"There's an old saying," she murmured, "and how true it is! When our children are young they tread upon our toes, but when they grow older they tread upon our hearts. Ah me! Will my heart ever be light again?"

A fortnight before, when Mrs. Lyvett's grief was fresh upon her, a lady who had been the companion of her girlhood, and who was about her own age, came to spend the day with her. It was a Miss Champion. Seated together in confidential chat, their minds had opened to one another as they had never opened before; and Mrs. Lyvett, her heart aching and her eyes dropping tears for her misguided son's sake, spoke freely.

"Lots are more equally balanced in this world than we suspect, Fanny," she observed. "You, I know, have envied me my married life—the great blessing, as you have looked upon it, arising from the companionship of my husband and children. You have secretly rebelled—and bear with me my dear friend,

while I say it—at your own unwedded lot, almost questioning Heaven's judgment in decreeing it. But which fate is the happier, think you, when children bring these dreadful sorrows upon their parents? Oh! Fanny, believe me, many a poor wife, smarting under her sea of trouble, would be thankful to that same Heaven never to have had a husband, to have borne children. She envies you single women then, and wishes with her whole heart that she could be as you are. Yes; be assured, Fanny, that there is compensation everywhere—that our destinies are pretty exactly equalized. Though you are debarred from this more active life of matrimony, its advantages and pleasures, if you like to call them such, you are free from its troubles and its cares."

If Mrs. Lyvett could say that, and feel its truth, a fortnight before, when the comparatively light trouble of Frederick's marriage was alone upon her, how much more earnestly and painfully would she soon have cause to say it now!

A servant came into the room, and she turned her head.

"What is it, Thompson?"

"I was going to light the gas, ma'am."

"Let it be at present. My head aches."

So the man closed the door, and left her alone in the twilight as before. Amidst the clash of carriages

dashing up to the neighbouring house, she did not hear the quiet wheels of a slow cab, approaching hers. The evening star was beginning to twinkle in the western sky.

Had Thompson come back? Mrs. Lyvett turned quickly, for the door had opened again. She could not see very well in the dusk.

"Why, Frederick! Is it you?"

It was he, but he did not answer the question. Shutting the door, he came forward in silence.

That all the particulars of the arrest just made—for it was the same ill-fated evening told of when the last chapter broke off—would be in the newspapers on the morrow morning, together with the names in full, and go circulating around the length and breadth of London, Frederick Lyvett knew quite well. Amongst other people that they would reach were his own family: his father, mother, brother, and sisters. Amid all the terrible anguish that the affair was already costing him, this immediate fact held no light share.

After parting with his unhappy wife, when the doors of the place of detention were securely closed on her for the night, he had a long conversation with the detective officer, Smith. That individual gave him the details of the affair, so far as they had come to his knowledge, more fully than had been given

him before; and not a shade of doubt could, or did, rest on Frederick Lyvett of his wife's guilt. The examination was fixed for the following day at Marylebone Police-court, when she would be committed for trial. As the officer observed, they had the whole facts before them, and there would be no need of a remand. The coroner's inquest was also to be held on the morrow.

Mr. Smith left him standing in the street—for they had just paced up and down the pavement whilst they talked. Frederick Lyvett lifted his hand to his bewildered head, and strove to think what next to do, where next to go. The recollection of his father and mother flashed over him. Obviously his present duty was to break it to them, so that the morning newspapers might not be the first to inflict the shock.

But oh, what a task it was! what a task! no living being would ever know how he recoiled from it. His mother! his dear, ever-loving mother! Would to Heaven—he said it as he stood, lifting his hands in bitter anguish—that he had died before he had brought this disgrace upon her and hers!

But it must be done. That duty at least lay imperatively upon him. He stepped into a passing cab, and directed it to the home dwelling-house.

"Is my father at home?" he asked of Thompson, when he arrived there.

"No, sir. There's nobody at home, but my mistress. The young ladies are out this evening."

"Will my father be in soon, do you know? Where's he gone?"

"He is dining at Mr. Castlerosso's, sir," replied the man. And the answer was a sort of check-mate to Frederick's purpose. For sometimes, when the two partners dined together, they sat very late, talking of business. After all, he should be obliged to make the disclosure to his mother. Mr. Lyvett might not be home on this side midnight.

"My mother is alone, you say, Thompson?"

"Yes, sir; she's in the drawing-room, with a headache. I went up just now to light the gas, but she told me to leave it alone for a bit."

Passing upstairs to the drawing-room, he entered and closed the door. As he went forward, Mrs. Lyvett held out her hand. He took it in silence, drew a chair close to her, and sat down, retaining the slender hand in his. Mrs. Lyvett, gazing at him in the dusk, saw that his face looked strangely pale.

"How good of you to come in, Frederick! just as though you had known I was alone."

Still he never spoke a word. His breath seemed to be a little uncertain, as if he were in some agitation, and his hand, she now felt, was cold as death.

"Are you not well, my dear?" she asked, quickly.

"I shall never be well again, mother," was the answer he made, in tones that brought to her she knew not what of alarm. His agitation increased: there was no mistaking it now. Mrs. Lyvett's temples, already throbbing, began to beat violently.

"Something must have happened!" she exclaimed. "What is it? Oh, my dear, don't keep me in suspense."

"I have come in to tell you," he answered. "I meant to tell my father, not you, but he is out, I find, and may not be home whilst I stay. And—mother—had I the choice given me of telling you, or of having my lips closed for ever, I would choose the latter."

"Something has happened," she repeated, in no less agitation than himself, holding his hand between both her own.

"Something *dreadful* has happened, mother. Something more than dreadful: I don't know how to find words to relate it in. Oh, rather than do it, it would seem to me a light task to throw myself from this open window to be crushed to death on that pavement below."

Mrs. Lyvett gazed on him. She could not understand. Frederick had sometimes been given to use flowery language, but she had never heard such as this. A sudden idea flashed over her that some

accident must have happened to her daughters. Had their carriage——

"No, no," interrupted Frederick. "What I have to say concerns myself only, and—*and my wife.*"

Mrs. Lyvett dropped his hand and leaned back in her chair. The mention of the latter individual did not bring her pleasure, but it did ease her fears. She remembered to have heard that Miss May's temper was not good. Had she and Frederick been quarrelling?

But she was startled out of this thought, and out of her restored coolness together. Frederick had suddenly bent his face upon her shoulder, and burst into a storm of tears. The strain upon his feelings of what he had that evening been obliged to undergo, had now reached its extreme tension, and unmanned him.

Aghast, frightened, Mrs. Lyvett would have risen to call for restoratives, but he held her where she was. "Just a minute or two—mother! Bear with me a minute or two—and then I'll tell you."

And how he accomplished his task and did tell her, he never knew. Looking back at that hour in after-life, it never seemed to him but as so many prolonged minutes of horror whose very recollection could only be shuddered at. Mrs. Lyvett grew cold as a stone as she listened.

He did not tell her the worst then—namely his own conviction of the truth of the accusation. Rather he led her to infer that it must be some terrible mistake which investigation would disprove. For his mother's sake he did this; ay, and perhaps also for his unhappy wife's. But Mrs. Lyvett seemed to have grasped at the worst aspect, as if by instinct. Whether true or false, whether to be proved or disproved later, it was a fearful disgrace to have fallen upon the family; one that would make their name a by-word in the mouths of men. No wonder that Frederick Lyvett, prostrate with the blow, should give vent to his feelings as does a woman.

"Oh, mother," he sobbed, "forgive me that I have brought it upon you. In knowing that the wretchedness, the ignominy, cannot fall solely on myself, lies my chief punishment. It seems to me greater than I can bear."

How can a mother, a loving, gentle mother as was Mrs. Lyvett, resist her boy's penitence, his tears? She bent down her head and cried with him.

"If you would but reproach me! If you would but blame me, mother!"

"My dear, I cannot reproach you; that I shall never do," she answered, the bitter tears raining from her eyes. "It is for you I feel, for you that my heart is aching. But if you had only listened to your father,

when he said that person was not a fitting wife for you, how different things would have been! If you had only listened to me when I prayed you to wait the changes that time might bring about; to have patience; not to be betrayed into a self-willed and disobedient marriage! I told you, then, my darling, that a blessing would not attend such. It never does."

Frederick Lyvett groaned. His heart was torn with remorse and anguish, and he hid his face away from his mother.

"Where are you going now?" she asked, when, the interview over, but not the distress, he rose to leave.

In truth he did not know. To return to his rooms at Mrs. Cooke's, with their attendant remembrances, seemed more than he could that night bear.

"Will you stay here to-night, in your own room, Frederick?"

"No, no," he hastily replied. "But thank you all the same, mother."

Wringing her hand with a farewell pressure, he quitted the room. It was then nearly eleven. But Frederick Lyvett had lingered too long. Thompson was opening the hall-door to admit his sisters. He slipped within a small room on one side the hall, that they might pass without seeing him.

But if Mrs. Lyvett was lenient to her son, Mr.

Lyvett was not. She gave compassion; he reproaches. Most frightfully did he feel the blow, and the disgrace it brought with it.

"Father," spoke Frederick, in his humility and distress, "I deserve all you can say, and more. The repentance of my whole life will not suffice to atone for it."

The examination took place before the magistrates, and certain facts were testified to. Upon which Sophia Lyvett, otherwise May, otherwise Penryn, was committed to take her trial.

"Why, the very plurality of names would be disgrace enough, let alone anything worse," exclaimed Mr. Lyvett to his friend and partner, Henry Castlerosse.

CHAPTER XIX.

CONDEMNED.

THE trial was just over, and the suffocating court began to empty itself. What with the intense heat of the weather, the crowded arena, and the close, tainted atmosphere, even the calm judges themselves thought they should never be cool again. The judges had retired quickly from the scene, the oldest and gravest of them with the tears yet wet upon his cheeks, for he had been moved to no ordinary emotion while passing the awful sentence of DEATH upon the young and lovely woman who stood in the dock before him. It was no common case which had brought the public together that day, and the prisoner's was no common crime. Sure, never had a dark deed been committed involving so great an interest, or whose attendant circumstances comprised so mysterious a field of romance. What had been the previous career of the lady (let us call her so: she held that position when arrested), people could

not exactly learn. Some told one tale, and some another: in these unhappy cases, the most outrageous stories get promulgated. All they knew for certain was, that she was now found guilty of the great crime for which she had been tried, and was condemned to death. Not a single word was said of recommending her to mercy. The jury had considered that there were no extenuating circumstances.

Poor Sophia Lyvett! Could Mrs. Cooke's theory have been the truth—that she had not been herself when she committed the fatal act? One would indeed think so.

Oh, unhappy, mistaken criminals! When you do these things in the silence and secrecy of the dark night, and think that there is no eye upon you, that in this world, at least, you are safe from detection, you forget that there is ONE EYE, above, which never slumbers nor sleeps; that the ways of the avenging angel are not as your poor, narrow-sighted ways, and that what you deemed was a secret between you and the darkness shall speedily be proclaimed upon the house-tops! So it was here. *This* one was arrested, committed, and had this day taken her trial; been found guilty, and condemned to death. Never was guilt more conclusively brought home to man or woman. The deceit she had practised upon him who was now her husband, Frederick Lyvett, also came

in for its share of opprobrium. Not one, on not one, had been found to pity or excuse her, in spite of her youth and beauty.

The learned judge had said, in passing sentence, that never had he tried a woman whose crime, as it seemed to him, was of a deeper dye, or upon whom punishment would be more justly inflicted; and he adjured her—and it was here his feelings gave way—to give her mind wholly to repentance and to prepare for death, for that no mercy whatever would be accorded her in this world. The unfortunate creature was hissed by the idlers outside when she was removed from the court, as she had been hissed at her appearance there, and people gloried in saying to each other that they would gladly walk ten miles to see her hanged. Public indignation spoke out loudly against the miserable Sophia Lyvett.

A small knot of men stood talking together, ere they left the court, some of them in barristers' gowns. The counsel engaged in the case had hastened away, but others lingered. Amidst them stood young Mr. Jones the lawyer, junior partner in the eminent firm of Lyvett, Castlerosse, and Lyvett. Mr. Jones was a lion that day.

"Of course," observed Mr. Jones, who was uncommonly fond of the sound of his own tongue, "there was no hope from the first that she would get off;

but it will be an awkward stain, mind you, to have clinging to the family. James Lyvett—it's true, he is the very incarnation of pride—will never hold up his head again."

"It's bad enough for him, but what must it be for Fred himself?" quoth a grave Queen's counsel, who was intimate with the Lyvetts.

"Poor fellow!" responded Mr. Jones. "He has never held up his head since she was taken."

"Is he disenchanted yet, Jones?" demanded Mr. Dunn, a very young man in a wig, who had begun life in the office of Lyvett, Castlecrosse, and Lyvett, side by side with Mr. Jones, but had afterwards gone to the bar.

"I should think so. It was an awful piece of duplicity to palm off upon him."

"The marriage, you mean."

Mr. Jones nodded. "But Fred did play the fool richly, there's no denying it."

"Every man does, when he makes a low woman his wife," observed the silk gown.

"And Fred has the pleasant consolation of knowing that he plunged into it of his own accord," returned Mr. Jones. "Mr. Lyvett said the other day, that he must be—what was it?—a martyr to remorse, or some such poetical sentence. They said all they possibly could to him, Mr. Lyvett and James, and

his mother too, I believe, to dissuade him off the girl, and the more they said, the more obstinately Fred was bent on marrying her. They told him she would bring on him a life's disgrace: and she has brought it."

"But they could not have known about the—the antecedents?" cried Mr. Dunn.

"What a dolt you are, Dunn!" was Mr. Jones's answer, its complimentary tone being accounted for by the fact that he and the gentleman had remained close friends. "If they had known anything of *them*, they would have locked Fred up in a lunatic asylum first; and Fred himself would have gone to one, rather than have done it. Fred's not deficient in honour; only in brains."

"There's many a one with less brains than Frederick Lyvett who contrives to make a show in the world," remarked the Queen's counsel, significantly.

"You know old Castlerosse, most of you," resumed Mr. Jones; "know how hot-headed he is?"

A general nod from the hearers.

"Well, old Castlerosse, by the strangest accident, happened to be down at the country place where Fred went to get married. Fred thought he should do the job all quietly, in an out-of-the-way rustic parish, and nobody be any the wiser. The ceremony was on, and the parson had come to the interesting

sentence, 'Wilt thou have this woman to be thy wedded wife,' when old Castlerosse started forward, like the ghost in the play, and forbade the marriage. Charley Castlerosse says he wished himself up in heaven just then."

"Charley Castlerosse!"

"He was down there, acting bridegroom. No—what do you call it?—groomsman. Charley told me he knew it was all up with him the moment he heard his uncle's voice. And so it has proved; for old Castlerosse won't do the least earthly thing for him since, and the fact has got about; and Charley, poor fellow, dare not walk through Middlesex for fear of the writs. But I was going to tell you. Old Castlerosse, in his rage, nearly lifted the church roof off with noise; and finding that did not do, he calmed down to entreaty, and did all but go prostrate on his knees to Fred, praying him to stop the marriage, or at least to delay it till Mr. Lyvett's appearance, who was speeding down on the telegraph wires. It was of no use. Fred was like a mule in his obstinacy, and would hear no reason. He ordered the parson to proceed: and the parson, finding the papers were in order, and both of them of age, had no plea for refusing. So Fred and the girl were made one, old Castlerosse protesting against it, and telling him he was entering on perdition."

"Perdition it has turned out, and no mistake," said Mr. Dunn. "There can only be one thing worse than having your wife hung, and that's your mother. I wonder Fred Lyvett does not hang himself, and get out of it all."

"Fred's going on the Continent, there to hide his diminished head," said Mr. Jones. "He was only waiting the result of the trial. Had it been an acquittal—— "

"It never could have been an acquittal," interrupted Serjeant Wrangle. "The proofs were too clear."

"Well, but there's an 'if' in all cases, and the law deals in flaws and miracles," persisted Mr. Jones. "Had an acquittal been pronounced, Fred would have stopped in England until he had rid himself of her by a legal process. *If he could rid himself,* that is: my opinion's against it. When you marry a woman you marry her with all her antecedents, you see: it is a different thing from anything that may happen afterwards. However, the law will relieve him of her by a more summary act, and Fred starts directly. Fred's travels were finally decided upon in a family conclave, which Mr. James refused to attend. He is awfully incensed against him, is James."

"How does he mean to live?"

"He has an income, and the family will make it more. So he means to vegetate in Poland, or Siberia,

or Hungary; anywhere the English don't congregate, and there expiate his follies."

"Will he never come back again?"

"Oh, some time, I suppose, when the remembrance of the affair has died out of men's minds."

"Well, it is a terrible calamity to have fallen on him," remarked the grave Q.C. "I always liked Fred Lyvett."

"I say, Jones," cried Mr. Dunn, watching the departure of the elder and higher men of the profession, "did you not know Miss May once? I never saw her that I remember."

"Oh, she was only a child when you were there, Dunn. Yes, I knew her."

"And went in for some spooning, didn't you?"

"No. I might have gone in for some, but she cured me of the inclination beforehand."

"How did she cure you?"

"Threw a lot of poison over me."

"Poison!"

"In the shape of a basin of coffee-grounds. It ruined my waistcoat. And all because I just spoke a civil word to her: 'How are you, Miss May?' or something of the kind. That's what she did, Dunn."

"By Jove! a nice young lady! I should think Fred Lyvett will put on mourning for her! By the

way, Jones, is there any truth in the report that she was really married before?"

"I don't know. Some people say she was. It has not been proved. Nothing certain has come out about it."

"I wonder if Fred Lyvett knows? And now I am off, Jones. You may as well give a look in at my chambers to-night."

"All right, Dunn."

Sophia Lyvett had never attempted to deny her guilt. She may have thought the proofs of it were too overwhelming to admit of dispute. Both before the trial and especially after it, she seemed to be sunk in a state of prostrate apathy, which the authorities set down to the score of sullenness, but which was probably the effect of despair. Only once, and that was to her husband, did she enter upon any extenuation of herself. It was in one of the interviews he was allowed to hold with her in prison. In his delicacy of feeling—and of that Frederick Lyvett had a great deal, and was essentially a gentleman—he had abstained from questioning her as to the episodes of her past life which she had kept concealed from him; not once did he mention the unfortunate child who had come to light so unexpectedly. He retained for her his tenderness and consideration of

manner when with her, and on this day she had broken out into sobs as she spoke with him.

"Don't think of me worse than you can help," she whispered softly, lest the words might reach the ears of one of the keepers of the prison, who stood within sight, but was looking the other way. "I was mad when I did it, Frederick. I was quite mad."

And he found she was alluding to the deed for which she would have to suffer.

"The bringing home of the little boy on that day, when you and I had only just got home ourselves, terrified me nearly to death. Had I known where my mother was to be found, I should have taken him to her, and no ill would have come of it. But I did not know. I had no friend or acquaintance in all the wide wilderness of this great city whom I could trust, or to whom I could take him. The woman left him asleep on the bed, and after watching him for some time I ran away into the drawing-room, and sat down with my despair, asking myself what I could do. Once it came into my mind to try and make a friend of Mrs. Cooke, and beg her to allow him to be taken care of by her servants in private, until I could make other arrangements for him."

"Oh, that you had!" broke from the dry lips of Frederick Lyvett.

"But I feared she might refuse—I knew she was

an old friend of your family's. The most improbable ideas kept surging through my brain: that I would carry him off to the nearest workhouse, and leave him there on its steps with some gold tied round him; that I would knock at the door of some poor cottage dwelling, and beg of the people to take care of him for a week or so, and offer them a guinea a day for it; that I would go back to the lodgings I had occupied at Brompton, and put him and a bag of money into the landlady's hands, and say, 'I am in a strait; keep him for me for a little while.' Whilst these thoughts were surging through my brain, I heard a double knock at the front-door, and thought it was you. I started from my chair in awful terror, and clasped my hands, wondering what I could do. At that self-same moment the child burst into a loud cry, and I thought all was over with me. I rushed into the next room where he was lying, locking the door behind me against you, and ran to the bed, and put my hands on his mouth to deaden his cries. Oh! Frederick, as truly as that heaven is above me, I believe I was in that moment mad—driven mad by terror and perplexity. I declare that I have no true and clear recollection of what I did. And when I came out of my delirium the little boy was dead; and you—you had not, I found, come home at all. Oh, the dreadful fear and agony then! What I was to do I knew not.

And when I at last got up, sick and faint, and set about what must be done for your sake as well as mine, I have no recollection how I did it. Don't you pity me? Oh, *don't* you pity me?"

"With my whole heart," he said, with a wail. "But, Sophia, when matters had come to this pass that day, and the child was brought home and left upon your hands, why did you not make a confidant of me? Who knows but I—might have forgiven even that? I had made you my wife."

"And who knows but you might have thrust me out into the street? I should have expected it."

"No," he answered, "I should not have done that. I should, at any rate, have provided for you, and tried to shield you from the frowns of the world—not thrust you upon it."

He asked not another question; he inquired not, then or later, into matters of the past. The lines in his brow were deep with pain, and perhaps always would be.

And that was the only time Sophia Lyvett alluded in any way to the calamity which had brought her where she was. During the other interviews her husband was permitted to hold with her, she was studiously reserved and self-contained, taking little more notice of him than she took of the gaoler.

CHAPTER XX.

AT LADY HARRIET'S.

IT wanted but three days to that fixed for the execution, and the wretched prisoner, Sophia Lyvett, was in the condemned cell. Since the trial she had been remarkably quiet; was deemed, in fact, morose and sullen by those about her. Whatever her inward anguish might be, it was not betrayed to them. The chaplain could make no impression on her whatever; his visits, his conversations, were suffered, not welcomed: even her father and mother, who had been allowed an interview, were received by her with the same callous demeanour. Poor old broken-down and broken-hearted people, who were convulsed with grief. The shock had reached them through the newspapers; by that medium alone had they first become acquainted with the position their daughter was placed in.

On this day, Friday, the prisoner's mood changed. Whether it was the near approach of the end that

was startling her to feeling, or whether—as may be inferred—it was that a sudden loophole of escape presented itself, most unaccountably overlooked before, cannot be told. Certain it is, that early on this day she grew strangely excited, demanding that her mother should be sent for without an instant's delay.

In compliance with her wish, urged in terms that almost startled the authorities, the mother was summoned. It would appear that the prisoner then alluded, but not clearly, to certain matters and people connected with her previous history, not known before. She spoke in an undertone; and those whose duty it was to be present caught but a word here and there. The prisoner was urging her mother to some step, some exertion in her behalf.

"Sophiar," wailed the poor woman, through her tears, "I would go to all the great folks in the land, I would go to the Queen herself, I would walk my legs off, if I thought it would be of any avail to save or even lengthen your life, poor child!"

"Don't I tell you it will save my life?" feverishly uttered the prisoner; "it must save it. After all I have now said, do you think this gentleman will refuse? Why do you stop here, mother, losing time? It is short enough for what has to be done."

"Give me a moment, child. Let me think over

what you have said, and see my way clear. It has bewildered me."

The prisoner turned impatiently away, and the mother sat thinking, her head down, moving first one hand and then the other, as the various points of what she was deliberating upon presented themselves to her mind.

"If your Aunt Foxaby was but with us now, Sophiar!" she suddenly exclaimed, raising her head. "She might help to some purpose in this. Her people was great folks theirselves."

"You don't want my Aunt Foxaby or any other help," repeated Sophia, in her sudden access of excitement, all the more uncontrollable from her previous apathy. "No one can do me any good but *he;* and you are enough to go to him. And if you don't, mother, and don't get his promise to act and I suffer on Monday, you will be guilty of my murder."

Mrs. May rose, heaving a deep sigh. Most anxious, indeed, was she to do what she could for her unfortunate daughter: but she did not altogether comprehend what was to be done, or how to set about it.

"The first thing I suppose, Sophiar, is to find out where he lives You say it is near Belgrave Square."

"I say it used to be some street or square in that neighbourhood. I forget its name and number. I"—the unfortunate prisoner looked round, as if, in a

moment of aberration, she forgot that her desk and things were not at hand, as in her own drawing-room —"I had the address; but it is not here. Get a 'Court Directory:' you'll find it there."

"A what?" asked Mrs. May.

"A book called the 'Court Directory,'" explained the prisoner: and her tone was one of irritation; for in her present awakened excitement every moment that was lost seemed of more value than gold. "They will let you look at one in a bookseller's shop: if not, you must go to the expense of buying one. You will not grudge that to save me."

"Oh, child!" uttered the mother, with a rush of tears, "how can you say these cruel things? I would give my own life thankfully to save yours."

"You will not forget the name?" said the prisoner.

The poor woman shook her head. "I shall remember it only too well. Is he married?"

"What has that to do with it?" cried the prisoner, exasperated at the unnecessary question. "No, he is not."

No! How could she utter so deliberate an untruth? she, so near the grave!

Mrs. May waited to ask no more. She departed, and proceeded to her work—which was a task of delicacy. Later in the day, she found herself in the aristocratic regions of Belgrave Square. She had

apparently discovered the address required, for she ascended the steps of a house there without hesitation. A formidable footman, all splendour and powder, threw open the door.

"Does Captain Devereux live here?"

"No, he don't."

"No!" repeated Mrs. May, with a petrified, scared look. "Where does he live then?"

"Colonel Devereux lives here."

"Colonel Devereux! Perhaps it is the same," she added, after a pause. "I'm sure, though, it was Captain Devereux I was told to ask for.

Even so. Sophia had unwittingly spoken of him by the name most familiar to her mind.

"Colonel Devereux was Captain Devereux once," the man condescended to add. "What do you want?"

"I want to see him," she replied, making as if she would enter.

"Not so fast, my good woman. The colonel is not to be seen."

"Oh, but I must see him! I must see him!" she returned, in excitement. "Please, sir! good sir! let me enter!"

Her tears fell, her voice rose to a wail; she pressed forward, and the man pushed her back. In the midst of this commotion, two ladies, who had alighted from a carriage, came up the steps.

"Is anything the matter?" inquired one of them, turning a plain but very kind face upon the applicant.

"This person wants to see the colonel, my lady. I told her he was absent, but she does not believe me."

"Oh, ma'am! oh, my lady!" cried Mrs. May, her ears catching unconsciously at the title, as her equally unconscious hands caught humbly at the arm of Lady Harriet Devereux, "let me see Colonel Devereux, and I will bless you evermore. I come upon an errand of life and death."

"Colonel Devereux is not here at present," returned Lady Harriet. "But is it anything in which I can aid you? Step in; you seem to be in great distress."

She led the way to a room, the other lady entered with her, and the applicant followed. Lady Harriet untied her bonnet, and sat down. Mrs. May stood beyond the table, nervously rubbing one hand over the other.

"What is the matter?" inquired Lady Harriet. "What did you want with Colonel Devereux?"

"To see him; to see him. Oh, ma'am, please to let me see him!"

"Colonel Devereux is not in England," said Lady Harriet, whose composure of manner presented a very great contrast to the excitement of the unfortunate applicant. "He is expected shortly. He may be

home ever to-day, or he may not be home until next week."

"Next week!" groaned Mrs. May, the last words speaking to her a volume of despair. "Then it would be too late, for she would be in her dreadful grave."

"Can you not explain your business?" resumed Lady Harriet, surprised at the words, and interested in the stranger's deep and evident tribulation. "You had better sit down. Who are you?"

"My lady, if I tell you who I am, perhaps you will turn from me with horror," she answered, the tears dropping from her eyes, and quite ignoring the permission to be seated. "You will, maybe, order your servants to fling me down the steps of your house."

"I think not," said Lady Harriet. "I can feel for distress, no matter what may have led to it. Speak out"

"There's a poor creature—you must have seen it in the newspapers, my lady, for they've been all full of nothing else—now lying in prison, a-waiting to suffer," whispered Mrs. May, putting up her hands to shield her face.

"Sophia Lyvett," interrupted Lady Harriet, "formerly Sophia May. Yes, I have read somewhat of it," she added, in slight hesitation. And the other lady, one younger and far prettier, who had stood at

the window looking out, glanced hastily round. It was no other than our old acquaintance from Parkwater, the Countess of Tennygal.

"I am the prisoner's most unhappy mother," said Mrs. May. "Oh, ma'am! don't despise me more than you can help. Indeed, we have always lived respectable until now, and I and her father would have died to save Sophiar from committing such a wicked crime."

"I respect your grief, my poor woman," observed Lady Harriet, after a pause of astonishment, "but what is the purport of your application to me—to Colonel Devereux?"

"I brought him a message from her. If I could deliver it to him, it might lead to the saving of her life. She thinks he might speak for her, and save her."

"Speak for her to whom?"

"Oh, ma'am, I don't much understand; *he* would know, she said. To some high and mighty man, who has great power under the Queen."

Lady Harriet caught at the meaning. She supposed that the prisoner wanted the colonel to intercede with his father, Sir Archibald Devereux—who was the Home Secretary—to spare her life. And this was the exact truth.

"Indeed, I fear she is altogether mistaken," returned

Lady Harriet. "The case is of far too grave a nature for Colonel Devereux to interfere with."

"My poor child says she knew the colonel once, ma'am—though, indeed, she called him captain, not colonel. It was while she was out as governess with a grand family in Ireland."

"Yes, at Lady Tennygal's," interposed the countess, glancing across at Lady Harriet.

Mrs. May turned round; in her tribulation she had forgotten that any one else was present.

"Like enough it was, ma'am," she answered. "Sophiar, poor thing, was fond of keeping her doings and her places a secret from us. She says the colonel can save her life if he will, and that he *must* for their old acquaintance's sake."

A pause. Neither of the ladies made any comment. Curious ideas, disagreeable reminiscences, were arising to each of them. Lady Harriet flushed crimson to the roots of her hair.

"Let me deal with this, Harriet," somewhat sharply spoke Lady Tennygal, as she turned to the applicant.

"It is impossible that Colonel Devereux could help your daughter, though he were here, and his will ever so good. No one, I fear, can do that. Not all the country could save her."

"Ma'am, perhaps he might," returned poor Mrs. May. "She says he can. Oh, let me try him! let

me try him'" she beseechingly added, clasping her hands. "Ladies, if you had a child condemned to death, you would be as anxious as me not to leave a stone unturned to save her. I don't know what you may be to Colonel Devereux—perhaps his sisters—but I ask you, for dear humanity's sake, to let me see him if he comes home in time. She says that it is a duty that will lie upon him, and that he knows why."

"Yes," interposed Lady Harriet, rising from her chair, "I promise that you shall. Though I see no possible chance of aid for your daughter, and I think that you must be labouring under a delusion to hope for it; you shall see Colonel Devereux if you will. Poor woman, it is no fault of yours."

"Oh, my lady! Fault of ours! Will you believe that till my poor child was taken, me and her father never knew she had been in any misfortune; and then we did not believe it. It is gospel truth that I am telling you," she sobbed, the hot tears raining from her eyes.

"You shall see him," repeated Lady Harriet, in kind tones. "If Colonel Devereux returns home in time, you shall certainly see him if you will."

And the unhappy woman quitted the room, leaving her thanks behind her.

"Don't let us think about it, Harriet!" cried Lady Tennygal, with impulsive quickness. "Of course one

cannot quite help thoughts—they rise unbidden, as I saw they did to you—or quite shut the eyes to the fact that this would seem to bear upon certain old suspicions at Parkwater; but we don't *know*."

Lady Harriet did not immediately answer.

"I don't care to defend Tody, as you know, Harriet; I gave that up long ago. But, as I say, we do not know; and it is always better to look on the bright side than the dark one. Indeed the dark one in this case would be too horribly dark."

A murmur, half assent, half groan, which she could not entirely suppress, was the only answer given by Lady Harriet Devereux. She alone knew, or ever would know—for she was one to hide her sufferings away with heaven—how many wrongs and trials her husband wrought upon her. She bore it all, striving ever to be patient and pleasant, even with him; for the sake of her two little girls, she would not bring about a rupture with their father. And so she bore, as many another gentle wife has to bear.

CHAPER XXI.

A RACE WITH TIME.

As if to give the unhappy prisoner the chance of life she was struggling to find, Colonel Devereux landed in England on that self-same day. The yacht, which belonged to a friend of his, Major Courtney, put in at Deal. They, and sundry more friends (choice spirits all, and Colonel Devereux the oldest and the choicest), had come back from a long cruise. The yacht had been for the greater part of the time out at sea, only touching now and again at some foreign port for provisions. Home news was therefore fresh to them. Colonel Devereux and one of the others, Viscount Dooham, purposed getting up to town at once, and, while waiting for a train, solaced themselves with some bitter beer and the newspapers.

"Hallo!" cried the viscount, a very young man, in his teens yet; "here's a woman going to be topped on Monday."

"Ah!" carelessly remarked Colonel Devereux, who was glancing over the military news.

"I say, waiter," said the viscount, halting in his reading, and looking up from the newspaper, "what did she do? It says she is young and handsome."

"Who, sir?" asked the waiter, who had not been attending.

"This—what's the name—Sophia Lyvett. She is to be hung on Monday."

"It's a lady who killed her child, sir. That is, a child," added the man, striving to be correct. "Some say she was only its aunt, or a relation of that kind."

"A lady!" repeated the viscount, lifting his eyebrows, and kicking Colonel Devereux's feet, that he might take note of the amusing waiter.

"Yes, sir, a lady. Leastways, her husband was a gentleman. She was just married, and nobody knew anything about this child; which it was a previous marriage she had made, report says, if it was her child. The child was brought home to her unexpected by the woman who had it at nurse, and the lady got afraid, and took its poor little life. It's said that when the police went to take her she was going to a ball, dressed out in satin and diamonds."

"Was she tried in that?" asked Colonel Devereux, yawning. The news did not interest him.

"In what, sir?"

"The satin and the diamonds. Dooham, she must have created a sensation in court."

The waiter shook his head. "I don't think she was, sir, or the papers would have mentioned it. She was remarkably handsome. Educated too: plays and sings beautiful, it's said. It has made a great deal of stir, I assure you, gentlemen."

"Young and handsome!" cried Lord Dooham. "Perhaps she'll get off."

"Oh no, sir, there's no chance of that. She's to be hung on Monday morning without fail. I know some gents as talk of going up to see it."

"What, all the way from here?"

"Well, you see, sir, it's a case quite out of the ordinary."

"Devereux," resumed Lord Dooham, as the communicative waiter went away, "did you ever see a turning-off?"

Colonel Devereux nodded.

"I never did," said the viscount, deprecatingly, almost ashamed to avow the fact. "Suppose we go and see this one?"

"You can go," said the colonel, "I shan't. The last I went to was enough for me; I said then I'd never go to another."

"Well, I should like to go."

"It's not worth it. I wonder how long this train means to be?"

The colonel got up and stretched himself, utterly

unconscious that the ill-favoured affair under discussion could in any possible manner concern him.

"By Jove, I hear the train!" cried Lord Dooham. "Come on, colonel."

Colonel Devereux took his seat in the train, and went steaming up to London. It was growing dusk when he reached his home. A woman, who had waited, in her patience, outside that house for many hours, saw the cab drive up, and watched him in. He greeted his wife with cool indifference; it was the best greeting he ever vouchsafed her. That Lady Harriet received him this night with unusual coldness, he did not notice, and would not have cared for, if he had noticed it. Ordering lights into the library, he went in, and Lady Harriet let her aching head fall upon her hand. There were moments when her hard lot pressed poignantly upon her: it did this night. Not a loving word for her after his many weeks' absence; not a greeting kiss! And the unpleasant episode of the day had made her head ache violently.

She was interrupted by the entrance of the footman. He whom we saw at the door in the afternoon.

"My lady," he cried, "here's that woman come again. I believe she has been waiting outside all this time. She will not go away, and she says your ladyship promised her she should see the colonel."

"Yes; I did promise. Show her at once into the

library. It is right that she should see him," Lady Harriet added, in a murmur to herself—"right, in justice and in mercy."

Mrs. May took Colonel Devereux by surprise. The servant said, as he threw open the door, "A person to see you, sir," for she had refused to give her name, and then he closed it again. The colonel was standing before two wax-lights, reading letters. Mrs. May looked at him: a dark, repulsive-faced man, who stared at her in astonishment. At least, the heavy frown on his face caused it to be repulsive then.

For Colonel Devereux was not in the habit of allowing this kind of impromptu intrusion, and felt wroth both with the intruder and his servant. Mrs. May stood trembling just within the closed door.

"Who are you?" he demanded, haughtily. "What do you want?"

"Oh, sir, don't be harsh with me!" she implored, stepping forward. "If all that I suspect is true, you ought not to be. I have come with a message from *her*."

He began to think this woman must have escaped from Bedlam. Truly she looked wild enough: and trouble was rendering her incoherent.

"From *her*, sir. My poor child, Sophiar Lyvett, who is in Newgate a-waiting for her execution."

A recollection of Lord Dooham's conversation with

the waiter at Deal recurred to Colonel Devereux. He connected the woman's words with that, as having reference to the same subject, but he connected them with nothing else.

"Waiting for her execution!" he repeated, when his surprise allowed him to speak. "Sophia Lyvett!—what have I to do with it, if she is? She is nothing to me."

"She ought to be something to you," retorted Mrs. May, indignant at what she thought was his want of humanity. "She was something to you when she was Sophiar May—if 'twas only as an acquaintance living in the same house."

"So-phi-a May!" he repeated slowly, his haughty tone changing to a subdued one. "It is not Sophia May who—who is condemned, is it?"

"It is nobody else, sir," answered the mother, bursting into tears. "She had just been married to young Mr. Lyvett."

The flush that had suddenly heated the colonel's face turned cold again. He sat down, and passed his handkerchief across it.

"I don't know that I understand," he said. "I heard—certainly—there was some young person left for execution. The—the crime was the killing of a child, was it not?"

"Yes, sir. A little boy that would have been, it is

said, two years old come September. Sophiar says you can save her, sir," replied Mrs. May, her voice dropping to somewhat of a confidential tone; which tone would of itself alone have roused the colonel's ire. "She says that you are related to some great man, an officer of state, I think she called him, who can pardon or hang criminals, according to his will; and she bade me say, sir, that you must ask for her pardon from him, and get it."

"I cannot do it," returned Colonel Devereux, aghast. "The—the person you allude to would not listen to me. I—I don't know any person; I don't know what you mean," he added, speaking his contradictory words with hesitation.

"Oh, sir, she says you can. I believe, from your own manner, that you can: and may you find mercy yourself in your dying hour, as you now—if it be in your power—show mercy for my poor condemned child!"

"Don't introduce any of that trash," was the interruption, for any allusions that bore reverence were never acceptable to Colonel Devereux; and just now he was feeling frightfully annoyed. "It will not weigh with me; quite the contrary. It is impossible that I can attempt to save her."

His tone of irritation, his apparent refusal, told harshly on Mrs. May, and she could have found, in

her heart, to strike him as he sat. As to himself, his temper was always bad, and he had never been driven into such a corner as this.

"I *can't* do it," repeated Colonel Devereux. And he believed that he could not.

"Then, sir, am I to go back to the prison to-morrow, to that unfortunate girl, who is beside herself with hope and excitement, and tell her that you refuse to help her? That will be a bad finish to my day's work. Sir, I have stood outside this house ever since noon, pacing about in the broiling sun and sitting down upon the opposite door-steps, with no comfort but my weary heart."

"No one asked you to do it," was the colonel's rejoinder.

"Perhaps not," she resentfully replied. "But the lady gave me hope that you might be home to-night, and I should have waited there all night, and to-morrow, and the next night, if you had not come."

"What lady?" he hastily inquired.

"One that came up to the door when the grand footman with the white head would have drove me from it. He called her 'my lady,' and she brought me in, and heard my story, and was sorry for me: and I think, sir, it was she that gave leave for me to enter to-night. Sophiar said you had no wife, sir, but it struck me the lady must be your wife, and I took

the liberty to ask the man just now, and he said, Yes, it was."

Colonel Devereux was frowning ominously.

"And now that I know it is your wife, sir, I'm thankful that I did not say all that was in my thoughts, for I am sure she had a kind heart, and it would have troubled it. Truth is, I knew it might do my poor Sophiar no good with such great ladies. There was another lady with her, younger."

"You had no business to come to my house at all," he exclaimed in his great irritation. "I cannot help you. You can go."

"Oh, sir, pray don't say so!"

Colonel Devereux rose and pointed to the room door. "Your coming here has been a mistake," he said. "I feel sorry for your daughter, but I have no power to save her. She labours under a delusion in supposing I have. Tell her so."

"Sir," cried Mrs. May, preparing to depart, "you best know. But if ever so little power rests with you, and you mean to sit down with your hands afore you and not try to use it, but let her go uncared for to her cruel death, I can only say that you will deserve to suffer as much as she does; and so the public will say when they come to know the truth. Yes, sir: for I'm sure that what I suspect in my mind is the truth. Sophiar has been silent, and kept your

name and the past from the world; but it is more than me and her father will do if she dies without your bestirring yourself to save her. We——"

"Will you go?" sternly interrupted Colonel Devereux, whose hand was still pointing to the door.

"We will publish the story abroad, sir: it shall be in all the newspapers in this blessed town. I'll tell it out aloud as long as there's a soul left to listen to me."

Mrs. May dropped a curtsy, for she never forgot her respect to her betters, turned, and left the room. Had the natural lines of his face not been so unsympathetic, his black eyes so hard, she would have fallen down prostrate and clasped his knees, and besought him with tears to accord her prayer. But she saw him at his worst; and she believed that there was neither goodness nor humanity, no, nor a spark of compassionate feeling, to arouse in Colonel Devereux.

Colonel Devereux's first movement, on being left alone, was to take a few strides on the library carpet, and give vent to sundry uncomfortable ejaculations. When he had, by these means, a little cooled his wrath and perplexity, he sat down to deliberate.

His imagination took him, and would take him, to the next Monday morning, to the sight which Lord Dooham had invited him to go and witness. The various points rose up before him, one after another,

like the pictures in a phantasmagoria. Colonel Devereux, in spite of himself, shuddered a little; what feeling he possessed was for once touched.

Self was always prominent with him; and Mrs. May's concluding words made, perhaps, more impression on him than all the rest—that the truth, if Sophia died, should go forth to the world; at least, what she was pleased to think the truth. That, at any rate, must be stopped, if possible. To have his name bandied about in conjunction with this extraordinary and sensational affair would be, to say the best of it, inconvenient.

Presently he rose up suddenly, as if some plan of action had occurred to him, and went into the drawing-room. His wife was sitting there.

"Do you happen to know whether Sir Archibald is in town?" he demanded.

"He is," answered Lady Harriet. "And complaining of having too much to do to leave it. So your sister said to-day when she came home with me."

So! It was Lady Tennygal, then, who had been the second lady spoken of by Mrs. May! And he had passed his word to her and Tennygal in those old days at Parkwater—— He turned, impatiently, to leave the room.

"Are you going out?" asked Lady Harriet.

"I am. What of that?"

"Nothing," she sighed. "Shall you be late?"

"Very possibly. I may not be in at all to-night."

"To neglect me is nothing new," thought poor Lady Harriet; "but he has never once asked after the children!"

Colonel Devereux proceeded to his father's residence, and learnt that Sir Archibald was dining out. Lady Devereux was at home, the servant said.

"Alone?" he inquired.

"No, sir. Lady Tennygal is with her."

With a muttered word, Colonel Devereux turned to leave the house again.

"Sir Archibald breakfasts early, as usual?" he looked back to say.

"Oh yes, sir."

So the colonel returned home again. He took some refreshment, which he had not yet done since leaving Deal, passed an hour in the library with his large accumulation of letters, and then went to bed.

Early rising was not amongst the virtues of Colonel Devereux. Besides, he had passed a remarkably restless night, and towards morning he dropped into a heavy sleep. It was past eight when he awoke. With uncommon speed he dressed, went out without breakfasting, and threw himself into a hansom, desiring to be driven to Sir Archibald Devereux's. The man whipped up his horse that it might go its

best, as behoved it when taking a fare to the great Sir Archibald's, her Majesty's Secretary of State. Colonel Devereux paid the man, and bounded into the house.

"Is Sir Archibald in his breakfast-room?"

"Sir Archibald has breakfasted and gone out, sir."

"Gone out!"

"Twenty minutes ago, sir."

"Hallo!" called out Colonel Devereux, rushing out again. "Stop the cab."

The man was driving off, but turned his horse round at the call. Colonel Devereux got into the cab.

"Where to, your lordship?" asked the man, putting on the title at a venture.

The question was a poser to Colonel Devereux. The wide world of London was around him, and he knew not in what little spot of it to find Sir Archibald.

"Wait," he said to the driver, and went into the house again. His brother Lionel, who acted as Sir Archibald's private secretary, was in the library, opening letters.

"Lion, where's the governor?"

"What, is it you!" exclaimed Lionel Devereux, raising his head. "When did you get back?"

"Last night. Where is he gone to, I ask?"

"He did not say. Something troublesome is up, I expect, for he swallowed his breakfast at a mouthful,

and was off. *My* opinion is that the Ministers are on their last legs, Tody. He was with Harebury the best part of yesterday."

Colonel Devereux paused to reflect. It was possible—not likely, but just possible—that his mother might know. She was not downstairs, he heard; so he ascended a flight higher, and knocked at the door of her chamber.

"Come in," answered her ladyship, who was yet in bed. She supposed it to be her maid, and when the door opened and a black head presented itself, she shrieked out and buried her face under the clothes.

"Don't be alarmed," said the colonel, "it's only I. Sir Archibald is out, I find. Do you know where he is gone to?"

"Good gracious, Theodore! What in the world do you come startling me like this for?"

"I am in a hurry. I want particularly to see my father, and my business with him will not bear delay. Have you any idea where he is gone?"

"How should I have?" returned Lady Devereux. "He does not worry me with his business affairs, and his politics."

Colonel Devereux went down to the cab again.

"Downing Street."

Sir Archibald was not in Downing Street—had not been there. From thence he drove to the

Premier's, Lord Harebury. Lord Harebury had gone out of town the previous afternoon.

The cabman had a rare fare, for once. Until past noon he was driving the colonel about from place to place. All in vain: no tidings could be heard anywhere of the Home Secretary. Whether Colonel Devereux's conscience had come to him in his restless night, or that Mrs. May's threat was preying upon him, certain it was he was now feverishly bent upon obtaining the reprieve of that poor unhappy woman left for execution. Hot, jaded, irritated, he drove once more to his father's house. Sir Archibald was in; had been in since ten o'clock; and Colonel Devereux, when he heard it, gave the cabman his fare, and a hard word or two to the world in general. Sir Archibald was alone, and his table was covered with papers.

"Ah, Tody! So you are back again."

"I have been out looking for you all the morning, sir, and a pretty fine hunt I have had of it. Can you spare me five minutes?"

"No," answered Sir Archibald. "I am too busy."

"But I must demand it—I *must*," returned the colonel; and Sir Archibald felt some surprise, for his voice had a sound of emotion in it. "It is on a matter of life or death," said the colonel, abruptly.

"Well, two minutes, then. I can't give you more."

"There's a girl to be hung on Monday morning at Newgate."

"Ah, there is," replied Sir Archibald, supposing that his son ignored his injunction, and was entering on a little prefatory gossip. "A sad affair! It is the same young woman who once got into Bessie's house as governess, by means of false certificates. I told you I was busy."

"Is she sure to suffer?"

"Sure! What do you mean?"

"She is young to—let the law take its course, as they call it."

"Young in years; I fear old in iniquity. Of course the law will take its course. Theodore," continued Sir Archibald, imperatively, "I am short of time. What is your business?"

"Sir, this is my business," answered Colonel Devereux, dashing at once to the point. "I have come to ask you to save her."

"Save *her!*" echoed Sir Archibald.

"Yes, sir, to save her."

"You cannot know what you are saying. I could not save her life if I would. There has been enough hullaballoo raised lately over this kind of thing, as you must know, and clemency is stopped for a time."

Theodore Devereux did know it. It had been the fashion for some time to pardon every prisoner left

for execution, no matter of how deep a dye their crime; the public had cried out about it, and the Home Secretary had in consequence found himself in a little hot water.

"Why, in the name of wonder, should you make this senseless application to me?" he demanded of his son, who was evidently ill at ease. "What have you to do with the hanging or non-hanging of criminals?"

"I have something to do with this one," returned Colonel Devereux, bending his face, as if to examine some of the papers on the table. "At least, I wish to have."

"Well?" For he really had the grace to hesitate, not at all liking to say to his father what he had to say.

"Well?" repeated Sir Archibald. And the other spake a few words in a low tone.

Sir Archibald Devereux sat gazing at his hopeful son, and there ensued a dead silence.

"If you never accord me a petition from henceforth, sir, you must accord me this," urged Colonel Devereux. "She has sent to me, from Newgate, to save her life; to intercede with you to spare it. She says I owe so much to her. Perhaps I do."

A great scowl had gathered on Sir Archibald's brow. "Have you been cognizant of this all along?—since the woman was first apprehended?"

"I never heard a syllable of the matter until yesterday when I got home: and then I did not know who the condemned person was. Her mother came to me last night. Sir, you must save her."

"The thing is not possible," returned Sir Archibald.

"It can be made so, sir. The power rests with you."

"The whole country would cry out against it. There would be one universal feeling of indignation raised against me. The woman is detested for what she has done, and receives no pity. A poor little harmless sleeping child! say the public. And when they demanded—as they naturally would demand—upon what grounds I had acted, I should have none to give. No, it would damage me too much."

"Stand it, stand the damage," pleaded Colonel Devereux, pushing his hair from his brow. "Sir, I *dare* not let her suffer. Whatever may be the consequences, consent to risk them. At the worst, they can be but trifling—none at all to you personally: a little passing wonder, a little blame from the cursed press."

"If this woman get off, every one that has suffered before her was murdered!" emphatically exclaimed Sir Archibald.

"What if they were? But none too many have suffered lately, sir," continued the colonel. "Let this

one be reprieved after the example of the others: you can begin to draw the line with the next one. If she suffers, I shall have her family upon my back, demanding retribution. It is hard to say what horrible stories will not be concocted and blazoned forth to the world. I could not remain to face them."

"Whom have you to thank for all this?" harshly demanded Sir Archibald Devereux.

"Myself, I suppose you wish me to say," returned the son.

"I do. You have been a bad man all your life, Theodore; and, unless you change wonderfully, you will die a bad one. You have brought me trouble always: I suppose you will bring it until I am in my grave. What evil possesses you?"

"Whether good or evil possesses me, it is my own look out," was Tody Devereux's sullen answer, for he had a mortal enmity to being told of his faults; "and that is not the consideration now. Sir, you *will* save her?"

"Leave me," returned Sir Archibald. "I will reflect upon it."

"It does not need reflection, and there is no space for it," he persisted. "I don't understand the routine of these things; but, if her Majesty has to be seen, it will be a race with time. To-morrow is Sunday morning, and they are beginning to erect the scaffold."

"Theodore!" impulsively repeated Sir Archibald Devereux, "I would sooner have cut off my right hand than have heard this."

"Give me your promise, sir, before I leave," the son continued to urge. "It will cost you nothing—only the stroke of a pen. You will retain the after consideration of knowing that, if you have erred, it was on the side of humanity."

There was a faint tinge of banter in the last sentence, which Sir Archibald Devereux detected not. In a moment of less perplexity he would have caught it fast enough. A few minutes more, and Colonel Devereux went out from his presence.

CONCLUSION.

At six o'clock on Monday morning Newgate was aroused from its stony propriety by the arrival at its gates of a state messenger. He bore a reprieve for the unhappy woman, Sophia Lyvett; and when the sheriffs and the other officials reached the prison, in pursuance of their functions, to attend the execution, there was to be no execution to attend. The mob had the worst of it, and those who had hired windows: among whom was probably Viscount Dooham: the one lost their money, given in hire, and the other enjoyed a few hours' soaking, for the morning had risen pouring wet: not to speak of the disappointment, in which all alike participated. When the later editions of the daily papers reached the country towns, people made a sudden rush for them, eager to read of the last moments of Sophia Lyvett, her dying speech and confession. Instead of which, they had the negative satisfaction of perusing the short fact of her reprieve.

The world and his wife rose up in wonder. Reprieve *her?* Why, she really *deserved* hanging! What mania was it that had laid hold of Sir Archibald Devereux? the newspapers as good as asked him.

They received no answer. They never knew. Shrouded in mystery was that unaccountable act (and entirely unaccountable, save to the three or four behind the scenes, it really was), and would ever remain so.

The Lyvetts had most cause to ask the question, for Frederick was *not* now legally relieved of the wife he had so hastily and rebelliously wedded. More than ever need did there seem to be for hiding his head in exile.

"Keep up your heart, Frederick, my darling," said his mother, as she sobbed her farewell on his breast, the morning of departure. "We know not what blessings the future may hold in store for you. Years bring about wonderful changes: the darkest day be succeeded by a bright morrow. You never were guilty wilfully but of that one undutiful act, and surely your punishment has been heavy; *how* heavy Heaven sees—and it is always merciful. We may have you again with us sometime, free and happy."

"And at peace," sighed poor Frederick Lyvett, in his inmost heart.

And the unhappy woman herself? Did the reprieve

which she had so feverishly pressed for bring to her the relief she had sought? Was the life of labour, to which her sentence was commuted, a more tolerable fate, seen in the vista of the future stretching out before her, with its dreadful remembrance, its wearing monotony, its hopeless despair? We cannot know.

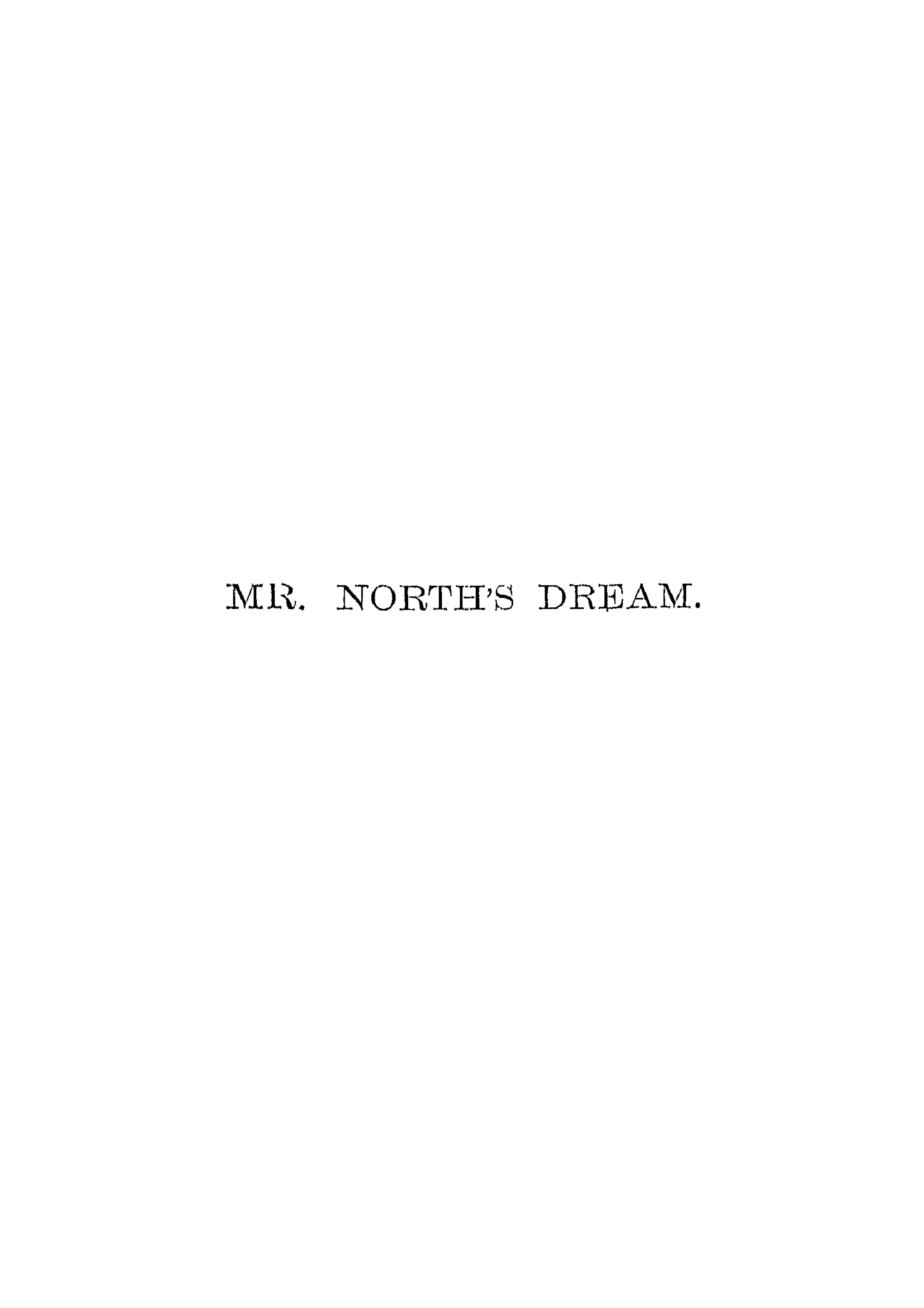
She refused to see her father and mother. Before her final departure from Newgate, permission for an interview with her was accorded to them at their earnest prayer; but she sullenly declined it.

"Oh, May," groaned the mother, in the bitterness of her anguish, as she sat on the edge of the bed in their one solitary room, "I'm afraid it was a frightful mistake."

"What was a mistake?" asked May.

"Her bringing up. If we'd not made her into a lady and edicated her according, she'd not have despised us, and all this might never have happened. We stuck her up into a wrong spere, don't you see, May; and the poor thing seemed to have no right standing of her own. She was neither one thing nor t'other; she couldn't be one of us, and she couldn't be one of them above us; and so she had no nat'ral spere in the world to make herself contented in. It was a fatal mistake."

THE END.



MR. NORTH'S DREAM.

MR. NORTH'S DREAM.

I.

DRIVEN FORTH.

THE house stood in the midst of extensive grounds in one of the many suburbs of South London, a green lawn dotted with shrubs lying before the front-entrance. Land was at a discount there in the old days, and Mr. North had bought the place for a comparatively small sum. He was a man of some consideration in the city, of high commercial and private character, well regarded by his fellow-merchants.

The lawn lay steeped in the lovely twilight of a midsummer evening. The moon glittered on the leaves of the laurels; the flowers, closing their petals, threw out their sweet scent, so that the air was rich with perfume. It was wafted to the open glass-doors of a small sitting-room, where stood a young girl; and her heart, as she inhaled it, grew more rapturously

joyful than it had been before, if such a thing were possible.

It was Millicent Carden, the niece of Mr. North's wife, and his ward. A merry, guileless, loving girl of seventeen; not quite eighteen yet; gay, careless, sweet-tempered. Her face was fair and refined, with a bright bloom just now on the delicate features; her light brown hair, unconfined by comb and fashion, fell in silken curls. Mrs. North had gone out that night, taking her daughters, Frances and Amy. Mr. North, his son, and his nephew, Archie, were in the dining-room, for they had been delayed in the City, and came home late. The glow on Millicent's face was only a reflection of the glow that illumined her heart; nay, her whole being. For she had learned to love one with a strange fervour; and in such a nature as hers—deep, silent, ardent—love changes the whole current of life, and is as a very ray snatched from Eden.

The room-door opened and some one came in. Millicent did not turn; she stood where she was, and began to hum a tune carelessly; but her pulses leaped up with a bound, and the cheeks' glow increased to crimson.

"Why, Millicent! I thought you were going with the rest."

Ah, she could turn calmly now. The colour faded.

The pulses became sober again. It was only John North.

"I did not care to go, John. And your mother thought we should be too many."

"Then I hope my mother made an apology for leaving you. Frances or Amy might have stayed at home."

"Frances and Amy are ages older than I. Don't look so solemn, John: it was my own wish to remain; I proposed it myself. Is my uncle not going?"

"Yes. But not with me: later. He has some— matters to settle first with Archibald. I'll go out this way, I think. Good-night to you, cousin mine."

John North had made the pause in reference to the matters his father had to settle with Archibald. Miss Carden had thought nothing of it. If she had momentarily thought there was anything strange in the words, it was the name Archibald—for she had never heard him called anything but Archie. She watched John North cross the lawn in his evening dress. He was a tall, fine man of three-and-twenty, and had just been made a partner with his father. The young lady stepped out on the gravel and silently executed a dancing-step.

"You good old John! As if I should want to go when they did not invite *him!* As if I would go, unless my aunt had made me! I fancied John

suspected something last week, though," she pursued, more thoughtfully, bringing her dance to a conclusion; "he looked so hard at us that evening when he came up and saw us in the laurel walk. Oh, how beautiful the night is! how lovely everything is in the whole world!"

Stooping, she plucked one of the sweet June roses, and put it within the folds of her light summer dress, her hands and arms looking so fragile and faultless in the moonlight. Then she stepped back indoors, and stood gazing out on the fair scene. Things were so still! Not a sound broke the solitude; and railways, with their shrieks and turmoil, had not quite cut up the place then. As the light in the west grew darker and the moon brighter, the nightingales began their song in the neighbouring trees; the twinkling stars came out in their canopy; the light on the laurels turned to silver. Insensibly the girl herself broke softly into melody. Six months before, Archie North had given her "Lalla Rookh;" she had soon learned its seductive songs by heart.

"There's a bower of roses by Bendemeer's stream,
And the nightingale sings round it all the day long;
In the time of my childhood 'twas like a sweet dream
To sit in the roses, and hear the bird's song."

The striking of the clock interrupted her. Ten. Ten! Why, what could they be about so long in the dining-room? With a light step, she went along

the gravel walks, and so round to the dining-room window.

It was closed. Closed that hot summer night: and her uncle, Mr. North, was so fond of air, having the windows always open, except in the dead of winter! Millicent looked into the lighted room, and what she saw caused her heart to beat wildly.

Archie North stood against the wall; his arms folded, his head bowed, his good-looking face inflamed with tears, his whole aspect one of humiliation—of intense shame. He was as tall as his cousin John, but younger—only twenty. Only twenty! And exposed at that age, without a home (excepting lodgings) to the snares and temptations of a London life! On the table lay some papers; they looked like bills; and Mr. North stood opposite Archie, talking, with his right hand outstretched, and an awful look of severity upon his face. Millicent turned sick with undefined fear, and crept back to the little room. What could the shame be?

The dining-room door opened, and voices were heard in the hall. Millicent, trembling from head to foot, looked out of this room cautiously. Archie had taken up his hat and a light over-coat, that he wore to protect his clothes from the summer dust.

"Never attempt again to cross my threshold," Mr. North was saying, in the cold stern tone of an irre-

vocable decree. "You are a disgrace to the name of North, and I cast you off for ever from me and mine."

Archie went out without an answering word, and North shut the hall-door upon him. Then he crossed the hall and went up the stairs, his boots creaking. Mr. North's boots always creaked; it had a pompous sound, like himself, for he was a pompous man. He was dark, upright, portly, with a head well thrown back; eminently respectable, eminently self-important: doing his business strictly, as respectable men like to do; a large subscriber to charities, a good husband and father; but, in the midst of it all, very hard.

Millicent went back to the open window, and saw Archie North crossing the lawn, the light coat swung on his arm. Was he going away for ever? With a heart sick to faintness, with a mental confusion that seemed to put everything into a tumult, she ran after him, conscious of nothing but the moment's impulse.

"Archie! Archie!"

Archie North turned round. He was not her cousin; was not in fact related to her. If he had begun to love her, however deeply and enduringly, he knew it must all be at an end now.

"What is the matter, Archie?"

"I thought you were out to-night, Millicent."

"No. The others went; I did not care to go. My uncle is angry with you: what is it?"

"Angry!" he repeated, as if the word were a perfect mockery to illustrate Mr. North's state of feeling towards him. "Yes; he is angry."

"But you have not deserved it."

"I have deserved it all; and worse."

With his hand upon her shoulder he went back across the lawn to the room she had quitted. Standing just within the open window, he looked down upon her while he spoke. The moonlight played upon his troubled face, hard now almost as his uncle's, and lighted up the blue eyes that seemed filled with nothing but a dogged obstinacy.

"I am going away, Millicent. London can no longer hold me, so a distant quarter of the globe must do so. I have been upon the wrong track this long time. God forgive me! I never meant it to come to this."

She tried to speak, but not a word came in answer. Her lips were white, her throat beating.

"On my soul, I had resolved to do better!—to set about redeeming the past. For your sake, Millicent; for your sake. And I should have carried it out, Heaven helping me. When I am far away, my darling; when they tell you wicked stories of me—and yet not wicked in one sense, for they are true—remember this: it was *you* who awoke me to better

things. It has been just one faint glimmer of light in a dark career: dark before; doubly dark after, for that's what it will be. God bless you, Millicent."

He clasped her to him with a close pressure and kissed her unresisting face, down which the tears were flowing What Millicent said she did not fully know at the time, and never remembered afterwards; confused words of redeeming the past, of allowing her fortune to help him to redeem it.

"No, no," he said, with a kind of harsh laugh. "I am a great blackguard, Millicent, but not quite so bad a one as that Thank you for the thought," he added, holding her two hands in his, and looking down into her eyes as she stood before him. Thank you, *my darling*, for all; thank you, above all, for your love. I do not suppose—bear with me one moment—that we shall ever meet again on this side the grave. If I can redeem things over yonder—but I'd better say nothing of that. My lot will probably be downwards: you will become the wife of some happy man, and the mother of his children. Fate deals out her prizes equally. Fare you well; fare you well for ever."

With his coat on his arm as before, he went swinging across the lawn again, leaving Millicent ready to die of the moment's agony. And yet it all seemed so unreal! At the gate, lingering amidst the shrubs

that surrounded it, and looking out for him, was John North.

"I couldn't go, Archie, in the uncertainty," he said, coming forth into the moonlight. "How has it ended?"

"How should it end?" returned Archie. "There was only one way."

"You are discarded?"

"Of course I am discarded. Sent adrift. Your father is a harsh man in anything that touches his respectability, or his name. Nine city magnates out of every ten might have done just the same."

"What shall you do?"

"What I can. He has not been all hardness. He said something about giving me a fresh start in life: paying my passage to Australia, and transmitting fifty pounds, to be touched on my landing there. I am to meet him to-morrow. I don't grumble, John; I've deserved all I've got, and more. I shall see you, old fellow, once again before I start."

A late omnibus passed. Archie North hailed it, and mounted on the top; and John went away quickly to the neighbouring house, that evening keeping festival.

Poor Millicent! She was dragging herself and her misery upstairs, when her uncle came suddenly out of his room in evening dress. She turned swiftly

into a niche in the wall, and stood there until he had passed.

Archibald North set sail for Australia. There was no mystery made about him or his ill-doings, and Millicent heard what the rest heard. He had not been guilty of any crime; had not robbed his uncle's cash-box, or forged his name: but he had been an excessively prodigal sinner on his own score, and come to general grief; he had made an ocean of disreputable debts, and altogether gone to the bad.

"And he had the opportunity of doing so well!" cried Mr. North, making severe comments in the bosom of his family. "I gave him a stool in my counting-house; I invited him here frequently; and this has been my reward! What he might have gone on to but for my providential discovery of his sins, I shudder to think of. Henceforth let his name be as though we had never known him."

And it was so.

II.

THE DREAM.

Six years went by, and the seventh was quickly passing. Mr. North and his children prospered and prospered; the ill-doing nephew had never been heard of, and was quite forgotten. Mrs. North was dead; Amy had married; but with the exception of those two losses, the inmates of the old home were the same.

It was Christmas-Eve, and bitter weather; ice and frost without, ruddy warmth and comfort within. The dessert-table was drawn to the fire in the dining-room, and Mr. North and his son sat there. John was deep in the pages of a review he had brought home from town, but Mr. North was only reading the faces in the fire, and sipping his port wine at intervals. He saw the face of his dead wife, whom he mourned sincerely, if soberly; he saw that of his absent daughter, who had a happy home of her own; he saw that of his younger son, also married

and flourishing. Mr. North's own face was smooth, after the manner of a man who has a calm conscience and a heavy balance-sheet—and he had both. His ledgers showed increase upon increase: on the other side he had dispensed largely to Christmas charities, public and private. Had Mr. North's thoughts been laid bare, they would have been seen to ignore altogether a sense of sin, and to run very much after the bent of a certain Pharisee: "I am thankful that I am not as other men are." Mr. North believed himself to be supremely good: he fully thought he was going swimmingly on the road that leads direct to heaven.

He saw other faces in the fire, besides those mentioned; his son, John's, who was sitting beside him; and Millicent Carden's. He was wishing they would form a union with each other, those two; he had wished it for some time. Millicent was of age now. In accordance with her father's will, she did not attain her majority until she was twenty-four: and Mr. North had then formally resigned to her his trusteeship, informing her at the same time that she was worth twenty thousand pounds, well invested. Had he been John, he should have proposed to her years ago; times and again he had felt inclined to say a prompting word; but he knew how much better these things work when left alone. Millicent had

been ill in the summer with fever—and she did not seem to have recovered entire strength.

"You will be thirty in a few months, John," suddenly observed Mr. North, breaking the silence.

John looked up from his review. "Yes; getting quite a middle-aged man."

"Not that yet. It will come, though, for years creep on us imperceptibly. Why don't you marry?"

Mr. John North cut two pages of his book before replying. "I don't know that any one would have me."

"What nonsense, John! In your case it would be only to ask and have. But if you *don't* ask, why of course——"

Mr. North did not finish the sentence. John laughed, but did not attempt to pursue the subject. His father looked at him.

"Yes, sir, though you may laugh, many would answer 'Yes' to the asking of John North. But there's one, above all the rest, whom I should wish you to choose."

"Why, who's that?" returned John, in some surprise.

"You need not go far to find her. Millicent Carden."

John North returned to his review again with a slight smile. And it vexed his father.

"Have you no better answer than that to give me?"

"I should not care to marry Millicent. She is my cousin, you know."

"And what though she is your cousin?" indignantly spoke Mr. North. "She has twenty thousand pounds."

John cut his review.

"And she is one of the best and nicest girls that the whole world contains. Don't be a fool, John"

"She is a sweet girl; a charming girl," came the ready assent. "But I have not thought of her as a wife."

"Think now, then."

The silence, and the impassive look on his son's face, did not seem to promise well for the proposition. Was Mr. North going to be thwarted in his hope?—the vexation the doubt brought showed him how surely he had been indulging it.

"Make up your mind to marry, and take Millicent," urged Mr. North impressively. "My blessing shall be upon it. John, I have hoped for this union a long while: cherished the thought I believe."

John North grew serious then. He closed the book, leaving the paper-knife between its pages.

"I am sorry for that, sir; very sorry to disappoint you, if you have indeed cherished it. I had no idea you were doing anything of the sort. Putting myself entirely out of the question, I am sure Millicent would not have me. She would not have any one."

"She is well again."

"Her health I was not thinking of, but her inclination. I have never exchanged a word with her upon the subject, but I am convinced her intention is not to marry. Millicent had her little romance years ago: and wore it out."

"Why, what do you mean?" cried Mr. North. "Would you insinuate that Millicent was ever in love?"

"Yes; unhappily. With Archie North."

Mr. North stared at his son, as if he were unable at once to take in the words. There was scorn in his eye, contempt in his tone, when he answered.

"In love with Archie North! Why, she was a child when he went away."

"Oh no, she was not: a girl of seventeen or eighteen is as capable of love as a woman of thirty; perhaps more so. Father, I know I am right. And Archie was in love with her."

"Archie, the reprobate!" apostrophized the elder man: and the utter condemnation of the tone, the hatred it expressed, served to prove that the offending nephew had never been forgiven—no, not in the least degree. "At any rate, if it be as you say, though I doubt it, she has had time to forget her fancy," added Mr. North. "I would rather say her folly."

"Quite time. But I do not think she has done it."

"And you would make this an objection to asking her to be your wife?—a child's passing fancy! I should have given you credit for more sense."

"Pardon me, sir, I did not say so. My own wishes, for or against, need not be brought into the discussion at all. What I said was, that Millicent would not have me, though I did ask her: and I am sure she would not"

John North opened the book again as he spoke, and went on cutting its leaves. For some little time he had been indulging a day-dream of his own, but it was not connected with Millicent. Mr. North tossed off the glass of port at his elbow, and said no more. He had never thought his clever business son so near a fool; and he intended to prove him one.

In the pretty garden-room, where you once saw Millicent Carden, you may see her still. The family often sat there. The window was closed now, the warm green curtain fell across its shutters in ample folds; the fire burnt clear and bright; the tea waited on the table, and Millicent sat ready to make it. Miss North had gone to a neighbour's to help in dispensing the prizes from a Christmas-tree, which she had for some days been assisting to adorn.

She sat at the table, waiting for her uncle and cousin to come in. But ah, how altered! Scarcely a trace remained of the winsome, happy girl of seven-

teen, to whom her boy-lover had bidden so abrupt and miserable an adieu six years and a half before. She wore a soft dress of light grey cashmere, and a close white net cap, very pretty, but almost as simple as that of a Quakeress. No ornament, excepting a gold chain, and some fine lace at her wrists. After the summer's fever, her hair grew so thin that they cut it close, and she had to wear caps: it was growing again now, but she wore the caps still. The features were delicate as of yore: the deep hazel eyes more thoughtful. She looked like one who has passed through tribulation.

For the first time the thought struck Mr. North, as he came in to tea, proving how slow we are, for the most part, to take up indications of the familiar, every-day life by which we are surrounded. In the subdued meek manner, the quiet face, the unobtrusive attire, so void of fashion and frivolity, Mr. North saw reason to think his son was right. His unobservant eyes, closed hitherto, were rudely opened.

"But she has had time, and to spare, to forget the folly," he thought. "Even its remembrance must have long ago passed away. John would win her for the asking."

John sat by her now, just as usual. But, as Mr. North noted their manners to each other, so entirely that of brother and sister, a slight doubt arose to Mr.

North, or rather would have arisen, but that he drove it back again.

"You look tired, Millicent."

"Do I? I am not tired; although Frances and I have had a busy day, giving away the things. The poor people are all so grateful to you, uncle."

Mr. North received the gratitude as his due. He deemed himself quite an earthly angel, in the matter of charity. "All right," he said in answer, "I hope none have been forgotten."

"If Millicent's tired, it must be at our keeping her waiting so long for tea," cried John. "It's half-past nine o'clock."

"Time you went for Frances, John," she said.

"I am going. Those mites were to be put to bed at nine, and she said she did not care to remain after that. She *is* fond of children, is Frances."

He rose to go out as he spoke; but opened the door again, and said a word to Millicent, who nodded an answer. "I shall be ready, John."

Mr. North, buried in his own reflections, did not observe it. He was making up his mind to speak to Millicent, and have that absurd question set at rest that John had started. He could not believe it yet; the longer he thought of it the more ridiculous it seemed. And yet he hesitated, lest he might do harm—harm to John's remote chance of succeeding.

The tea-things were sent away, and Millicent took out her work; some slippers she was working for John. Mr. North sat on in indecision.

"Another Christmas-Eve, Millicent!" he said, when he at length turned to her. "The years steal upon us, my dear."

"They do, uncle."

"I have been thinking to-night—one gets thoughtful at Christmas-tide—that it is time you were married."

Millicent looked at him, some wonder in her eyes; and a smile stole over her sweet face.

"You should say that to Frances, uncle. It is her turn first; she is ever so much older than I am."

"Oh, Frances," he slightingly said. "My opinion is she does not think of marriage. She lets her chances slip."

"Neither do I think of it, uncle."

"Nonsense," he testily responded; "I shall insist upon your marrying. I mean, I wish you to do it."

"No living person has a right to insist on my course of action," was the firm answer. "Not even you, uncle; I am my own mistress. Forgive me for saying it."

Mr. North's face darkened. "A fable was whispered to me—as a fable I regarded it—that some--some—what shall I call it?—some love nonsense had lain

between you and that miserable nephew of mine, who was a disgrace to his name"

A change passed over her face. The eyelids quivered, the mouth grew sad and pale. Mr. North watched the signs.

"Millicent! was it so? Answer me, child. Surely you can answer? It must be as a thing dead and buried now."

"Yes; I cared for him. And he for me."

"But you do not care still? You cannot."

"Perhaps not. I suppose not. I think he must be dead," she continued, a kind of weariness in her tone. "He would have been back ere now if he had lived."

"Back!" cried the scandalized man, "back! He'd know better than to venture back here. Why!" looking condemningly at her, "*you* would not have countenanced him had he returned?"

"Yes, I should. Stay a moment, uncle; don't be angry with me. But for believing him to be dead, I could not say this to you; I could not speak of him; I have thought he must be dead—oh, for these three years past. But had he come back with his—his wrong-doings—redeemed; hoping, purposing to do well in the future, I would have welcomed him, and helped him in it Let it pass; why should the discussion arise?"

"And it is for this man's sake—dead, though you

admit he probably is—that you deliberately say you will never marry? Shame upon you, Millicent! I am thankful your poor aunt is not alive to hear it."

"I did not say I should never marry," she meekly returned, and her tone was full of pain and contrition, as if accepting as her due the shame he cast on her. "I would not marry now; no one living could tempt me to do so; but I cannot answer for what I may do in the future—in years to come. The probabilities are that I never shall marry; still, I cannot answer for it. We all change so, uncle; as you must know."

It seemed so complete a check to any hope for his son, that Mr. North was angered beyond repression. He called Archie sundry hard names, recapitulating his committed sins and offences, in a far more comprehensive manner than Millicent had heard in the days of the trouble. She listened without comment, folding up the slipper and putting it away, until his wrath had expended itself and he was fain to cease. Then she spoke.

"Yes, uncle; I dare say it was all very true, miserably true; but you know he might not have continued so. There is such a thing as young men awaking to the errors of their course and entering on a better."

Mr. North would have answered that there was no

chance of the young man under discussion awaking to the error of his, but that his niece had left the room. She came back with her bonnet on: at which he looked surprised. She and Frances had wished to go to a Christmas-Eve service at a church close by, and John had promised to take them. Even while she was explaining this, they came for her.

Mr. North remained alone. Matters through life had gone so smoothly with him that he could not bear to be crossed. It tried both himself and his temper. He knocked the fire about, he paced the room, he walked into the hall in his restlessness. A good, domesticated girl like Millicent, and twenty thousand pounds, slipping through his favourite son's fingers! Mr. North dashed open the front-door, seeking a breath of the cold fresh air to cool his hot and angry brow.

It was colder than he thought for; flakes of snow had begun to fall, and there was some ice on the door-step; for Mr. North slipped upon it, and he would have measured his length on the ground but for the extended arm of some visitor, who had approached the door, and saved him. Mr. North threw his own arm around the pillar, while he took breath and recovered his equanimity.

"Merciful powers! I was all but down!"

"It is my uncle!" cried an answering voice. "I

was not quite sure of it, sir, until you spoke. May I come in?"

To say that Mr. North recoiled in some terror; to say that he gazed at the speaker in alarm, would not be to say much. *Was* it his nephew, Archie, standing there, or was it not? With the past conversation, turning on Archie North, with his mind full of him, Mr. North for one single moment fancied he was being deceived by some spectral vision, and backed into the hall.

Archie followed him and shut the door. It was not the Archie of former days, strong, active, buoyant, but a sort of broken-down man, who was lame, and walked with the help of a stick. Mr. North, seeming almost as if he really fled from a phantom, backed yet again into the parlour he had quitted: Archie and his stick went after him.

There ensued a scene. A scene little fitted for the blessed Christmas-tide about to dawn. When Mr. North had once taken in the fact that it was his nephew in real flesh and blood, and not a deception of fancy, his passion burst out. Archie had come at an unlucky time; but for his uncle's mind having first been freshly embittered against him, he might have met with a less harsh reception.

The traveller strove to explain his appearance and a little of the past. For six years he had been work-

ing manfully in Australia: all his bad habits, his careless ways eradicated; he had earned his living, but not enough to put by anything of consequence—great luck did not attend him. A changed man, yearning for home and friends, he had determined to return to the old country, where he could equally earn a competence; and he set sail. The ship, when she had arrived very near her destination, was wrecked on the coast of the Isle of Wight; and Archie had received an injury on the rocks, from which he was slowly recovering. It had detained him, and exhausted his available funds. He had written an account of this to Mr. North, which letter he supposed would have been delivered that morning, and stated that he was following close upon it.

All this he essayed to explain. Mr. North did not catch a word of it; he had not seen any letter. He put up his hands and stormed at Archie; he drove him forth, calling him very hard names in the process: he told him he did not know him henceforth, and never had known him since that wicked time seven years ago. Finally he closed the hall-door upon him; and the unhappy wanderer limped away across tho lawn.

Mr. North sat down by the fire to recover himself. He believed he had done a righteous thing in discarding the once bad man; and his own passion he

excused to himself. One cannot be always watchful, says the plastic conscience. Snatches of Archie's explanation stole into his mind now imperfectly, though he had not seemed to hear any of it at the time; amidst them a confused reminiscence of his having said he had only eighteenpence in the world.

"And that's more than he deserves," quoth Mr. North, savagely. "How dared he come back with his disgrace! How dared he show himself at my——"

A tremendous ring at the hall-bell cut short the speech. Mr. North started up with an evil cry of rage; he thought the fellow had come back again, and he hastened across the hall to drive him away, calling out to his servants that he would answer the door himself. And he opened it.

But he was wrong. The postman stood there, and put a letter into his hand.

"You are late," growled Mr. North.

"Yes, sir, the delivery is heavy to-night; and the roads are slippery; one has to walk with caution."

The letter was from Archie; the one he had supposed would have been already received. Mr. North flung it on the table in a climax of passion, and let it lie there.

The joyous peal of church bells broke upon his ear, ringing-in Christmas. Mr. North remembered how his wife, in her last Christmas, when she was sitting

in that very chair close to his elbow, had remarked that she could fancy they spoke the words, "Peace on earth, goodwill toward men." There was not much peace, or goodwill either, in Mr. North's heart this evening.

He heard the children entering; taking up the letter, he thrust it into his pocket out of sight, unopened. The only wonder was, that he did not put it effectively away from sight on the fire. Spiced wine, cake, and other good things were brought in; and they sat round the red coals, talking pleasantly, quite unconscious that Mr. North's plumage had been ruffled. Millicent sat by her uncle; she put her hand on his arm, that lay on the elbow of the chair, as if she would intimate that the little rupture between them was over and forgotten.

"I wish you had gone with us, uncle; I think you, would have liked it. The singing was so good, and the sermon beautiful. It only lasted ten minutes, but it was full of love and peace. He asked us how we could expect God's love to reach us if we did not love our fellow-creatures; he said this was the season for putting away evil passions and hatred, and for receiving the loving spirit of Christ into our hearts, who had done so much for us."

"What sort of a night is it?" responded Mr. North, his tones testy and impatient—as if there were

something in Millicent's words that grated on his temper.

"Snowing," answered John. "We shall have a white Christmas."

Mr. North went to rest with the others; and by that time, what with the fire and the good things he had taken, was in a tolerably genial good humour. But he could not get to sleep. Down deep in his conscience something sharp was stinging and pricking and making itself inconveniently felt. Tossing and turning from side to side, it was four o'clock in the morning before he lost consciousness.

And he woke up at six. He awoke with a great horror within, and trembling without. He sat up in bed and stared out into the darkness; and only discovered by degrees that what he had gone through was a dream, and not reality.

It was a dream that shook him to the core; a vivid scene so like life; and the terror, the dismay, the remorse that overwhelmed him were so indisputably felt—felt still in all their agony, now that he was wide awake—that Mr. North for the moment verily thought it must have been a vision sent to him, like unto the visions of old in the days of the patriarchs.

He had dreamed over again the scene of the past night, or very much of it—of the return of Archibald North and his thrusting him out. He further dreamed

that he had gone forth to pursue him with his anger, and went stamping up hill and down dale unable to discover him. Suddenly he found himself in a road-side field, about half-a-mile from his own home; and there, by the pond, he saw Archie lying dead, his upturned face calm and serene, pale but pleasant to look upon, as if its owner had passed to a happy rest. All in a moment the most intense remorse took possession of Mr. North as he gazed: he thought that he himself was also dead, and was about to answer for his sins. One, that looked like an angel, clad in dazzling white, stood there with a severe and pitying countenance; severe in its condemning anger, pity for him, for the man who had forfeited peace for ever. "Pardon, Lord, pardon!" he had cried out in his desperate anguish, knowing all the time that pardon was impossible; and a soft, sweet, mournful wail had sounded in his ear as the answer: "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to Me."

Mr. North awoke. Horror lay on his heart; drops, as of death agony, on his brow. It was some time before he could believe he was yet in this state of existence. It was much longer before he could in the least overcome the agitation that shook his soul.

In all reactions, such as this, the feelings necessarily run into exaggeration. The harshness of the previous

night appeared to Mr. North in the worst possible light; a heinous crime; a sin that perhaps even yet, although the world was his still, he might never find forgiveness for. It stared him in the face in all the vivid colouring that newly-awakened remorse wears. Ay, and not only this last act, but the whole course of his doings by Archibald, in the years gone by, came rolling before him as waves in a sea of fire.

"His own brother's son! his own brother's son!" were the words that kept beating their burthen on his brain. His brother whom he had loved very dearly when they were boys together; and who, when dying, had asked him to take care of his boy Archie. How had Mr. North responded to the dying prayer? It is true he had given Archie a stool in his counting-house, and told him he would get on if he took care, but he had not held out a hand to save him from sin. He had left him to find lodgings where he could, abandoning him (he saw it now) to the perils of a London life. And when Archie went wrong (and it was nearly a matter of course that he would go wrong) and his tribulations were laid bare he had hurled him forth upon the world, unforgiven. Those tribulations of poor Archie's were as nothing to the dire tribulations that rent himself now. And the refrain kept on and on, repeating itself for ever—"His own brother's son! his brother's son!"

So certainly did Mr. North appear to have seen the dead body lying by the pond, every little particular being as clear as a witnessed scene, that, but for the sense of shame that lay in attending to a dream, he would have got up and gone to the spot. As it was, he lay still until daylight. Drawing his blind aside, he saw that the ground was covered with snow; but not a deep snow; and the sky now looked tolerably clear. Perhaps a more miserable man than Mr. North, when he dressed himself, was not to be found that day in London. God had shown the self-righteous Pharisee his sin.

The children (he was apt to call them children still, as we all do, however old they may grow) came up to kiss him as he entered the breakfast-room, Frances first. "Dear papa! I wish you a happy Christmas, and a great many of them!" And so they all followed: and Mr. North groaned inwardly by way of answer.

What a room of luxury it was! a bright and blazing fire, a sumptuous breakfast. Tea and coffee in their silver pots, savoury meats warm and cold; the pâté de foie gras, sent to his orders direct from Strasburg, forming the centre dish. All this for him, the hard, selfish man, and for his children; but where was his brother's son?

He could not eat. John asked him if he had a head-

ache, and he answered yes; and when breakfast was over he turned his chair to the fire. Where was he? With only eighteenpence in his pocket, how could he find food and shelter? That the calamity he dreamed of had not happened, Mr. North felt sure of now, since no news had come, for the pond was within view of the road, and any one lying near it could not fail to be seen.

When left alone, he drew the letter from his pocket and opened it. It contained an account of Archie's life in Australia; of his shipwreck and injury on the coast of the Isle of Wight; just what he had wished to tell the previous night. "Do not, my dear uncle, think I am coming back to be a burden on you, or to disgrace you," it concluded. "Disgrace and folly, thank Heaven, I left behind in England, when that severe lesson was read to me just six years and six months ago. I have a little money (it is a good thing I did not bring it with me) lodged in the hands of some Australian merchants, who have a branch house in London, and I shall soon be earning more. They have offered me a lucrative post in their London house, which I think I shall accept. I know how justly angry you were with me when I went away; but I hope you will forgive and receive the prodigal son, and let me spend a happy Christmas-Day with you all in the dear old home. I am not quite up to travelling

yet, but I must come; I have set my heart upon it. Do you remember the cake that Amy used to make to be cut after dinner on Christmas-Day, with a gold and an iron ring in it? Do you remember the hopes and fears as to who should get the rings?—and the laughing and the fun? I hope the cake is an institution still. I would not miss it this year for the world, and so I shall come—and send on this letter to prepare my way for me. Dear uncle! the random boy has become a steady man; the scapegrace has put away folly for wisdom. You will not refuse to welcome him!"

Mr. North held the letter in his hand, and gazed at its writing (that such a thing should have to be told of him!) until his tears dropped fast upon it. It was so different from what he expected; it was no begging letter, this. And he had turned him out with harsh words. Where was he?—where was he? Mr. North put on his hat and went down the road, as if to take a little walk before service. No; the pond lay there still enough, but Archibald was not lying beside it.

They went to church; and Mr. North did his best to hide from others that he could not attend to the prayers. Peace on earth and goodwill to men! What had he to do with it now? Oh, he seemed very very far from Him whom the angels heralded with those glorious words. It was as if a great gulf had sprung

up between him and Heaven. He did not dare to stay sacrament, and he wondered how worthy in God's sight he must have been in the past Christmas-Days to partake of it. Not a single cry for forgiveness went up from his closed lips; his sense of sin lay too heavily upon him.

They dined at four; it had been the Christmas hour when the children were young, and it was never altered. There was no cake now; somehow sobriety in the later years had fallen upon them, and Amy, who was the cake-maker, had gone. She and her husband were to have dined there this day, but had been prevented from doing so. The only guests were two young ladies, orphans, one of whom (she was only a governess) made John North's day-dream. And he meant to tell her so, though he foresaw it would bring disappointment to his father.

It was a well-spread board: the turkey a prize; the plum-pudding rich; the wine good: but Mr. North could scarcely swallow a morsel; every mouthful seemed to choke him, every drop to chill him. Sitting alone in the little garden-room before dinner, he had lived over the interview of the previous night; he had lived over (oh, worse than all) the dream. An unpleasant superstition was beginning to creep upon him; he who had never been given to superstition in all his life: that the dream must have come to him as a

foreshadowing of the truth, and that Archibald was really dead.

Perhaps he was *in* the pond, instead of beside it? A horror broke over Mr. North at the sudden thought, just as it had broken when awaking from the dream. An awful dread, that it was so, took possession of him; a conviction so sure that he looked upon it as a prevision. No wonder he could not eat any dinner!

But, if it had not been for his own preoccupation, he must have seen that some unusual emotion was stirring Millicent. She wore her little net cap, but the cheeks it shaded were crimson, the eyes had a sweet light of expectation; her blue silk dress was nearly as gay as the dresses of yore. Little did Mr. North suspect that Millicent had read the letter. In his troubled state he had contrived to drop it in the morning, before going to the pond; Frances had picked it up, read it, thinking it no breach of faith, and shown it to Millicent. But they kept their own counsel, and concluded that the evident perturbation of Mr. North must be connected with this.

He could not sit there. His brother's son! his own brother's son! Making some inaudible excuse of headache, of not wanting dessert, he left the table at the close of dinner, and stole out of the house by a side-door, very much as though he were going to a funeral. That Archibald was in the pond seemed to

have grown into a certainty—perhaps had thrown himself in, broken-hearted, after that cruel reception—and Mr. North could not keep from it. It drew him to it with a sort of fascination, just as surely and helplessly as he felt that he was drifting further and further away from Heaven.

The snow was falling again; the air keen; and Mr. North had to walk slowly and carefully along the road because of the ice, until he turned into the field. Crunching the snow beneath his feet, he paced round and round the pond and strained his eyes into it; and saw nothing. But for the utter despair that lay upon him, the lively sense of guilt in the sight of God, a petitioning cry had gone up to Heaven that there might be no one lying beneath the waters. With the morrow he would confess to Archibald's visit and have the pond dragged. How bear the suspense until then? How bear it?

He took the field way home; the snow was less dangerous than the ice; and by-and-by dragged his weary limbs through the gate in the remote part of his own grounds, into which the fields opened. Scarcely had he done this when a groan broke upon his ear. A groan, and then another; and then something like a faint voice, speaking faint words.

"Halloa! what's that?" called out Mr. North.

"Uncle! Is it you?"

With a rush as of burning heat coursing through all his veins, Mr. North turned to the spot, and saw Archie lying in a sort of dry ditch or dyke. He was not dead: but he would surely have died, left there another night. The explanation was simple. On his way to an inn up the road, where he thought he might sleep, when driven forth the previous night, he had taken the more sheltered and well-remembered path through the grounds, in preference to the slippery highway. Awkward from his lameness, deceived by the snow, he had wandered from the path, missed his footing at the edge of the dyke, and had fallen into it. Upon essaying to rise, he found he could not do so; he believed his leg was broken. Too far off to attract attention, though he had called at intervals until strength and voice were exhausted, there he had lain ever since.

Mr. North was not of a demonstrative nature; but there may arise moments in all men's lives where emotion has more or less its way. He could not get to Archie in the dyke without stooping in the most inconvenient fashion, but he held one uplifted hand between his, clasping it tenderly, as a fond mother may clasp her little child's.

"If you can find one or two men, uncle, just to carry me to the inn and to get a surgeon?"

To the inn, indeed! No, no. Mr. North bounded

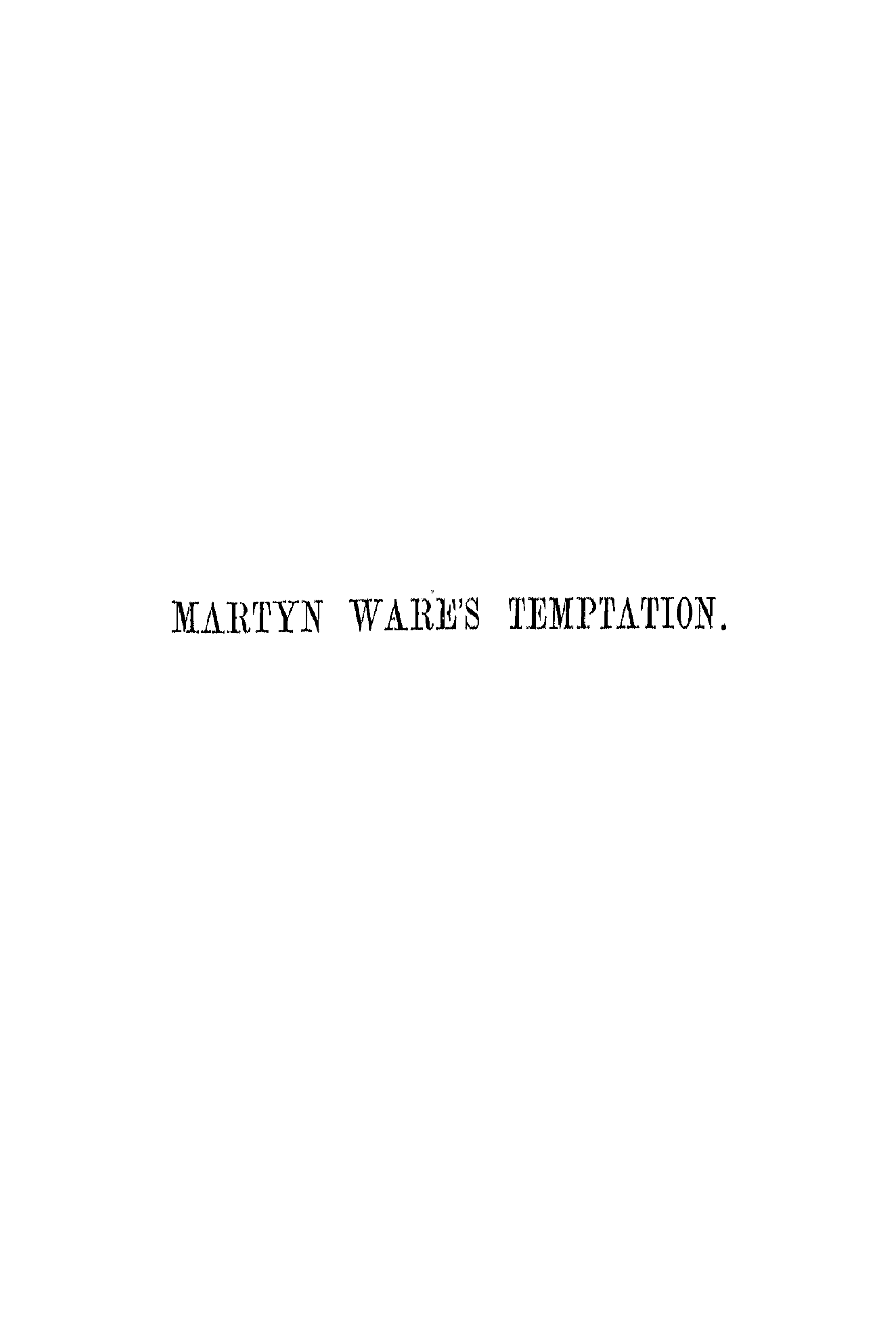
along the path to his home at a faster rate than he had tried since his days of youth and slenderness. The tears were raining from his eyes at the mercy vouchsafed to him; and in the thankfulness that his sin was not irredeemable, his mouth, like the Publican's of old, could once more open: "God be merciful to me, a sinner!"

They carried Archie in. The surgeon was there and did what was necessary, and said he would want good nursing. Mr. North gently answered that he would be tended as his own son. Millicent was admitted then. Their hands met, their eyes looked straight into each other's, and they knew that the boy and girl love had lasted in all its brightness; that sadness and separation were now over.

"To think that he should have lain there for eighteen hours with nothing to eat!" lamented Miss North, who was of a practical turn of mind.

"But I didn't, Francis," spoke up Archie. "I had by chance a hard biscuit in my pocket, and ate it this morning."

"After all, it has been a *blessed* Christmas-Day," murmured Mr. North to himself that night in his bed-chamber, as he reverently knelt down by his bedside. "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men?"



MARTYN WARE'S TEMPTATION.

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PART THE FIRST.

I.

THE MOTHER'S GRIEF.

THE somewhat cold yet wintry sun threw its rays on one of earth's fair and busy scenes in the spring afternoon of a year gone by. By the side of, but not close to, a factory, which was giving forth its tokens of life and work, stood a white house, built in the villa style, large enough for a gentleman's residence; pretty enough, with the artistically laid-out grounds and gardens in the midst of which it stood, to attract the attention of travellers on the approximate high-road. Other factories might be seen, near and distant, most of them considerably larger than this one, and other houses surrounded by their grounds, as well as poorer dwellings, cottages, and huts. This place,

situated in the heart of England, was called Wexmoor, and the factory first mentioned was known as Wexmoor Factory. Not many years before, this was the only factory in the district, and those larger and better ones had sprung up since. Its owner was a gentleman of the name of Martyn; and the white villa, built by himself some thirty years previously, was the residence of himself and his family.

Those cold thin rays are falling on it, and especially on a young lady who is standing at its entrance-door, between the pillars, drawing on her gloves. A charming-looking girl of twenty-two, with a thoughtful face —very thoughtful for one so young—and steady, somewhat deeply-set eyes of dark blue. She is attired quite plainly, you see: a violet merino dress, a warm grey shawl, and a cottage straw bonnet, trimmed with straw-coloured ribbons to match. It was long ago, I have told you; before the disfiguring fashions of these later years were invented. Those cottage bonnets of twenty or thirty years ago made a pretty face look all the prettier.

This was Miss Helen Martyn, the second daughter of the manufacturer. He had four daughters—Elizabeth, Helen, Sophia, and a little one of fourteen, much afflicted, named Amy. He never had a son, and his wife had died when Amy was born. Elizabeth, the eldest, acted as mistress of the house, and

as a sort of mother to the rest, though she was but two years older than Helen.

Helen Martyn drew on her gloves slowly, and then paused and looked thoughtfully out before her, far into the distance. It almost seemed as if she were hesitating whether to go on or not. At last she descended the white steps, wound round the broad gravel drive which surrounded the lawn before the house, and passed out at the front-gate. In turning to the right she nearly ran against a gentleman, who was about to enter it with a hasty step, on his way from the factory. It was Mr. Martyn, a wiry-built man, with a pale, hard face, and cold grey eyes, bearing not the least resemblance to his daughter.

"Where are you going, Helen?"

"For a walk, papa."

He went on, saying no more. But ere he had well passed through the gate, Helen, in her perfect truthfulness, her natural antagonism to anything like deceit, turned and spoke—she was conscious that to take a walk was not the sole object of her leaving home this afternoon. In point of fact, it may almost be said that she was going out in disobedience; for the place she thought to visit, if not positively forbidden in words, had been tacitly interdicted to Mr. Martyn's daughters.

"Papa, I should like to see Mrs. Rutt once more

before she leaves on that long voyage. I thought of calling to say good-bye to her."

"You can do as you choose," replied Mr. Martyn.

He did not speak in displeasure, but carelessly, as if the point were not worth consideration, and he hastened on towards the house as he spoke. Helen, feeling quite a weight removed from her mind, went away with a light step.

Continuing her road past the factory she soon came to a shady green lane. Nearly half-a-mile down this lane was a low-built cottage. It looked very pretty in summer, with its clematis-covered walls, and its rippling brook purling through its homely garden.

Ah! it was a sad tale; and Helen Martyn's heart sank as she approached the cottage, with that feeling of "not liking" to enter it. Robert Rutt had been employed by Mr. Martyn for the past six or eight years. He was one of his principal men—a sort of overlooker of the rest—and earned three pounds a week. About four weeks ago he had married a widow lady from a distance. The word "lady" is really not misapplied. It was said she was a lady by birth and education, but had fallen into very poor circumstances. It was said, also, she had believed that Rutt, who was a good-looking and superior man, occupied a higher position in Mr. Martyn's works than that which she found he did occupy. Be this as it might

she had shown outwardly no disappointment, but had accommodated herself to her position, as the wife of a working man, from the first hour Rutt brought her to this cottage at Wexmoor. Mr. Martyn's daughters soon made acquaintance with her; and Helen, at least, grew to like and respect her, and to like very much her young son, then a boy of about eleven years.

Things had gone on smoothly until now; or, to speak more strictly, until a few months ago. Late in the October month of the previous autumn, a circumstance had occurred unpleasant in itself and grievously disastrous in the results it was to bring forth. Robert Rutt, thoroughly well-conducted in general—otherwise he would never have been retained in his post by Mr. Martyn—was betrayed one day into drinking, and went into the factory in a half-maddened state. The man was too well aware of the effect drink had upon him; far worse than it has upon some men; and it was so rarely he transgressed that his sobriety had grown into a proverb. Still, he had been in this state before—had gone into the factory so—and his master, vexed and angry, had threatened him with dismissal did he ever so forget himself again.

As ill-luck would have it, Mr. Martyn met him on this day as he was rolling in, shouting and singing. Some sharp words ensued. The master ordered him

off the premises: Rutt, with some dim idea of proving that he was not incapable, waited his opportunity and stole in afterwards, when Mr. Martyn's back was turned. He attempted to work; he meddled with the machinery, and the result was that a large quantity of work was spoilt and the machinery almost fatally injured. It was a loss that Mr. Martyn could not well bear: his business had decreased of late years, and something like embarrassed circumstances were beginning to show themselves; hence, perhaps, his anger was more implacable than it might otherwise have been. In vain Rutt, when he came to his senses, humbly expressed his contrition, begged to be taken on again, promised that he would never again so forget himself as long as life should last. Mr. Martyn would not listen. With telling reproaches, with scornful words, he drove the man from him, declaring that, so far from forgiving him, it was his intention to refuse him a character, and to bring him to public punishment for the damage he had done. Before the moon, then at the full, had quite completed her monthly course, Rutt was dead. In going in search of work to a neighbouring town, it was supposed he came into contact with an infectious disorder: at any rate, he was seized with it, and died in delirium.

His death did not soften the feeling of Mr. Martyn. That gentleman felt the past grievance of his loss

as keenly as before, and in this his daughters shared. They sent no sympathizing inquiry to the poor wife; they did not vouchsafe her a kind word. It was not perhaps that they did not feel for *her*, but the loss their father had sustained left its bitterness in their hearts. What with the spoilt machinery, the destroyed goods, the waste of time and the inability to fulfil orders which this entailed, Mr. Martyn's loss could not be estimated at less than two thousand pounds. A formidable sum to the imagination of these young girls, and all the more formidable because of a dim fear, which had been for some time forcing itself upon their suspicions, that their father could not afford it. Helen alone felt deeply for Mrs. Rutt. In Helen Martyn's strict sense of justice, she asked her sisters how blame could possibly reflect upon the wife: she pointed out that the poor wife was even more deeply injured than they were. But she did not dare to call on her and express this: it would have seemed like flying in the face of her father's sense of injury.

Yes, in one sense, the disastrous results fell most on Mrs. Rutt, for she was left without a living or the means of gaining one. Rutt was a man who had lived up to every shilling of his wages. He liked to see his wife comfortable, to maintain a plentiful home: he was attached to her boy, now a fine lad of fifteen,

and had yielded to her wish of keeping him at school, a good day grammar-school in the neighbourhood, not yet putting him out to earn anything. It is a fact scarcely to be credited, only that there are unhappily too many of these facts in the world, that when Rutt died, there was not one penny of ready money in the house. Excepting the furniture, Mrs. Rutt was left entirely destitute: and the furniture of that small house was not of great value.

Many and many a time did Helen Martyn wonder what that poor woman would do, and how she was getting on, or would get on. Gossip spreads in a small locality, and the young ladies heard news from time to time of Mrs. Rutt. First, it was said she was living by disposing of the lighter trifles of her household; next, that her son, who had left school at Christmas, had found a temporary place at the doctor's, to carry out the physic bottles; by which he earned his food and a shilling or two a-week. And last, they heard that Mrs. Rutt and her boy were going to America.

This last news, much as it surprised Mr. Martyn's daughters, proved to be correct. Mrs. Rutt had a brother settled near Washington, a farmer; she had written to him on the occurrence of her great misfortune, and after two or three letters had passed between them, he had offered her an asylum with

him, and to find some employment for her son in the capital. What was perhaps more to the purpose in her temporary strait, he had offered to send the passage-money for one of them, hoping she would be able to find the other herself.

And this, Mrs. Rutt, as it was known, had contrived to do. The very man who had succeeded to her husband's post at the works made arrangements with her for taking the house off her hands, and as much of the furniture as she could leave in it. That was not much. Her husband had died the first week in November, it was now the end of March, and she had had only that furniture to live upon, parting with it piece-meal. Little wonder, then, that it was with difficulty she could save sufficient money for only her own passage, let alone her boy's. She had no friends in the neighbourhood, no advisers: she had never made a friend or sought an acquaintance since she came into it; and the cause is easily explained. Her position as Rutt's wife debarred her from associating with the higher inhabitants, and her own previous habits of life forbade her placing herself on a level with the wives of such men as her husband. It is true the Miss Martyns had often gone to see her, but only as the wife of one of their father's men in whom they took an especial interest.

All preliminaries were arranged, and she was to

sail from Liverpool at the week's end; was to quit Wexmoor on the morrow. The Miss Martyns heard this: heard that the promised letter from her brother, which was to contain the remittance, had come that very morning; and Helen had determined to run down to bid her good-bye.

To let her go away for ever without a God-speed, without a word of kindness to blot out the remembrance of the calamity caused by her husband, and for which *she* was in no way to blame, struck cruelly on the girl's heart. So Helen told her sisters what she should do, and put her things on; and when you saw her hesitating on the steps, she was deliberating whether to go into the factory in passing, and ask her father's consent, or whether she should go first, and confess afterwards that she had been. The meeting him decided it.

Mrs. Rutt, in her widow's cap, was seated in the parlour when she entered; a pretty room once, but almost bare now; and Helen started when she saw her. Helen Martyn had seen grief in her life-time, but scarcely such grief as this. Mrs. Rutt sat on a low seat, in what looked like the extremity of human sorrow, her head bent forward, the tears slowly coursing down her colourless cheeks. It must be confessed that Helen somewhat wondered; Mrs. Rutt was leaving no ties in the place that she should grieve after them,

and she had never pretended to be attached to it. She rose from her seat as Helen entered, and dried her eyes as well as she could; but the look of anguish remained.

"Oh, Miss Helen! Have you indeed come once again?"

"I could not let you go without saying farewell, and giving you our good wishes," was Helen's gentle answer. "My sisters have charged me to say everything that was kind for them. I hope you and Bob will get safely to your journey's end, and find a happy home there."

The words seemed to tell upon her terribly. She burst into renewed grief, so violent that Helen was alarmed. In vain Mrs. Rutt essayed to speak; nothing came forth but sobs. Helen, feeling shy and uncomfortable, knew not what to say: she came to the conclusion that all this must be for the loss of her husband. At length she grew calmer.

"Miss Helen, pray pardon me! You don't know what it is to part with your only child, to leave him alone to the mercy of the world without guide or protector, to go away from him with scarcely a prospect of ever seeing him again on earth. It is like the parting of death. It has seemed nothing less to me."

Helen could not understand. Amidst blinding tears,

amidst struggles to suppress the emotion that nearly choked her, the explanation was given by Mrs. Rutt. The letter had indeed been delivered to her that morning from America, but the promised remittance was not in it. Her brother had expressed his sorrow at being unable to send it; he had a sufficiently abundant home, but ready money was scarce with him; and he hoped she would manage to find it herself.

"It is an impossibility," she gasped. "I have no means of finding it, I have no friend in the world to help me. There will be expenses, too, I hear, in embarking, that I had not bargained for, and I shall have to sell some of my clothes to get away myself."

Helen felt shocked and grieved. "What will be done?" she asked.

"All that can be done is, that I must abandon my boy—it seems to me like abandoning him," was the sobbing answer. "I *must* go myself: I ought to have been out of this house on Lady-Day, Miss Helen, and now it's the twenty-ninth of the month. I must go; I have not a place to lay my head in in the old country, nothing to support me: and my boy must remain behind and find a living as he best can. I would sacrifice myself for my boy, if I knew how to do it; I would almost rather part with life than part with him."

"And how much would it cost to take him?" Helen breathlessly asked.

"I had expected ten pounds," she answered "It was what my brother said he would send. We could have made it do, Miss Helen. Of course we go in the cheapest way: it is some years since I could afford to be fastidious. Once on the other side, I should not mind if we had nothing left. We would find our way on foot to Washington."

It was very natural that Helen Martyn's first impulse was to wish she had the money to give: but in the next moment she remembered how futile the wish was. Ready money had not been very plentiful in their home of late; and what she and her sister Sophia had been able to get from their father, or Elizabeth supply from her housekeeping necessities, had been expended for a specified purpose, of which you will soon hear further. All that she could do was to express her heartfelt sympathy, her regret that she had not the money; and she did it with a sincere, low voice, the tears standing in her eyes.

Mrs. Rutt saw how genuine was the sorrow of that fair young face, and she strove to suppress further signs of her own. But when Helen was taking leave, the tears burst forth again.

"You will say a kind word to him now and then, Miss Helen, when you have the opportunity. He will

want it, poor lad, for he will soon be motherless. I shall not live long, parted from him."

"Does he remain in Wexmoor?" asked Helen.

"Just at present. I went to the doctor this morning, and he will keep him on for a time, until something turns up for him."

"What can turn up for him?" wondered Helen.

"Nothing—unless God sends it. And where he will sleep, or who will give him shelter, I don't know. Miss Helen," she continued, in an altered tone, "I would ask you, if I may dare, when the weddings are to be?"

A soft blush rose to Helen Martyn's cheek.

"In about a month," she answered. "Towards the end of April."

"May Heaven bless you both, and the gentlemen you have chosen!" aspirated Mrs. Rutt, in low tones.

Helen was walking slowly towards home, thinking upon the poor widow's grief, upon the many sources of sorrow there seemed to be in the world, when a slim, active boy, with a pleasing face and large intelligent dark eyes, came running round the corner of the lane. It was Bob Rutt—as the boy was universally called. He had, of course, no right to the name of Rutt, but he had never been called anything else since he came into the neighbourhood: his

Christian name happening to be the same as that of his step-father, Robert, had no doubt contributed to the habit. He raised his cap as he came up to Helen, far more as a gentleman would raise it than a working boy.

"I have been to see your mother, Bob," she said. "This is sad news."

"Was she grieving much, Miss Helen?" he eagerly asked. "I could bear it for myself; but I can't bear it for her."

"But you will be sorry to be separated from her, Bob?"

"Sorry!" he echoed, swallowing down a lump in his throat, and turning his face away from Helen. "When the letter came this morning, it seemed that I could have moved heaven and earth to go with her, and—and—— But it's of no use talking of it," he added, after a broken pause. "Thank you for your sympathy, Miss Helen."

"Oh, Bob, I am *very* sorry! Perhaps you will get out to her sometime."

"Yes, Miss Helen, perhaps so, if she lives. But she's one to take things dreadfully to heart."

He raised his cap again and went away. And Helen Martyn looked after him with misty eyes through the fading light of the evening sky.

II.

HELEN'S KNIGHT-ERRANTRY.

When Helen Martyn entered her home, the drawing-room was lighted and the tea waited on the table. They generally dined in the middle of the day: it suited Mr. Martyn's business habits, and it suited Amy's health. Elizabeth sat before the tea-tray, ready to make tea as soon as her father came in. He often kept it waiting, and she generally provided herself with some little trifle of work, not to waste the time; as she had now. She was sewing some lace edging to a strip of thin muslin; it was for a nightcap border for one of her sisters. She looked considerably older than her age: any one might have taken her to be seven or eight and twenty, with her grave manners and her somewhat old-fashioned style of dress. The young girl, Amy, stood by her side, holding her chair: a stranger might have observed with wonder a certain peculiar twitching in this child. She had had in her life, at long intervals, three attacks of paralysis, the

first having occurred when she was little more than an infant, and its effects never left her—as you may see by these ceaseless twitches. A great deal had been spent upon her: fresh doctors, sea-side visits; everything that could be thought of was tried. She did not grow much better; but the medical men thought if she could go over the next two or three years without another attack, she might possibly recover.

Seated opposite Elizabeth, her elbow on the table, and her face wearing a discontented look, was Sophia. She resembled Helen much in features, but her eyes had the hard look of her father's. Poor Sophia was apt to make a grievance of trifles; and she thought she had a very great grievance to trouble her just now. Helen also shared in it, and deemed herself as hardly used as Sophy.

To explain this, it must be stated that Helen and Sophia were both engaged to be married. Helen to a gentleman in London, of the name of Ware; Sophia to the Rev. John Gazebrook. You heard Helen tell Mrs. Ratt that the weddings were to be in about a month. All being well, the two sisters would be married on the same day. Neither match was particularly eligible in a pecuniary point of view. Mr. Ware was secretary to a public company; his salary three hundred a-year; and the clergyman was incumbent of a small living in Wales, worth not much

more than half that sum. But Mr. Martyn had not deemed it well to refuse his consent. He believed both the gentlemen, when they represented that their circumstances would be sure to grow better in time; and he told his daughters that if they chose to risk it, to live quietly until these better circumstances came, they might do so. Hope is strong in the human heart—very strong in those beginning life. Mr. Gazebrook looked forward to a good fat living; and Edward Ware to at least a doubled salary.

But the weddings, or rather the preparations for them, had brought forth some vexations: and Sophia was dilating upon these as she sat there with her elbow on the tea-table, and her chin leaning on her hand. The sum which Mr. Martyn had allowed his two daughters for purchasing what people call the trousseau was miserably small; at least it had proved so in the laying out. When given to them—it amounted to only thirty pounds each—Elizabeth, somewhat close in her views, pronounced it sufficient. In fact, it was Elizabeth who had suggested the amount to her father, though she did not choose to confess it: sixty pounds for the two would be ample, she had said to him. But even Elizabeth had come to the conclusion that more money must be had; she helped them a little from her housekeeping allowance, but that did not do much good. They had been

permitted to make their own purchases, upon the express condition that every article should be paid for when it was bought.

"We had better not have been married at all, if this is to be the end of it," grumbled Sophia. "I have not a single new silk dress yet, excepting the wedding dress. Neither has Helen."

"You have plenty of old dresses," said Elizabeth, who deemed it good policy to make the best of affairs to her sisters. "One or two of them have scarcely been worn at all; they are equal to new."

"Old ones! what are old ones?" retorted Sophia, growing crosser and more cross. "Never was such a thing heard of, as going to your new home with a heap of old things, and no new ones. Besides, I must have a lace mantle. How am I to get through the summer without a lace mantle?"

Elizabeth went on with her work, saying nothing. She had a habit of being silent when found fault with by her sisters. Sophia resumed:

"It's a perfect disgrace! Thirty pounds for girls in our station of life! If mamma had been alive, she would represent things more fitly to papa; I am sure of it. You ought to do so, Elizabeth. I can't make it out: papa's not a stingy man."

"Look at papa's losses of late, Sophy; at the one caused by Rutt; and his business has been dwindling

down and down through want of capital," urged Elizabeth, in low tones.

"What are we to do for gloves?" was Sophy's answer. "We can't have less than a dozen pairs each, and we have not the money for a single pair! I wish you were going to be married yourself, Elizabeth; you'd know what it is."

"You *may* manage with what things you have," was Elizabeth's answer. "I will do what I can in the matter; but if the worst comes to the worst, you must——"

"Be quiet, Elizabeth! the worst can't come to the worst. *Can* we be married, Helen, with what we have?"

Helen, who had sat quietly near the fire after taking off her things, looked up with a preoccupied air. In comparison with the *real* need of money brought to her notice that afternoon, the present discussion jarred upon her as bordering upon folly. "What did you say, Sophy? More things? Yes, I suppose we must have them."

"Suppose we must have them! why, you know we must," cried Sophy, angrily. "You were almost crying over it this morning. You know you were."

Quite true. Helen Martyn *had* almost cried over her wardrobe in the morning, wondering what her

husband and his friends would think of it, upon her going amongst them with so slight a one.

"Thirty pounds for the trousseau of Mr. Martyn's daughters!" repeated Sophy, working herself into excitement. "We ought to have had a hundred, at the very least. When Adelaide Gibson was married her things cost two hundred pounds. Helen, we shan't be able to afford a single evening dress."

"And you don't want them," said Elizabeth to this. "Evening dresses you *do not* want; you have enough of them."

"They have been worn I don't know how many times," cried Sophy.

"They *look* good, and they will be new where you are going. For that matter, Sophy, it is not to be expected that you will have much evening visiting in that remote and quiet place. Helen may have more in London. Amy, dear, you are shaking my chair."

"And I shall want dresses for it," said Helen, rousing herself from her recollections. "Oh dear! I wish I was rich!"

"I wish we could have tea!" interposed Sophy, going to another temporary trouble. "I have fifty things to do afterwards, and a long letter to write."

"Talking of letters, did you know that papa heard from Mr. Ware to-day, Helen?" asked Elizabeth.

"No; did he?" cried Helen, eagerly.

"Papa came in for some books he wanted this afternoon, and told me then; he forgot to mention it before. Mr. Ware is coming to-morrow for a day or two."

The pleasure which the information brought to Helen's face soon changed to pain. This embarrassment about the wardrobe seemed all the worse from the prospect of the presence of Mr. Ware. Elizabeth suddenly inquired whether she had seen Mrs. Rutt.

"Yes," replied Helen. "She was in the greatest trouble; I never saw distress like it before. She has to leave Bob behind her."

"Why?"

Helen explained. Miss Martyn did not seem to think much of it, and Sophy was too absorbed in her own ill-humour to listen. They did not witness her distress, thought Helen. Just then, Mr. Martyn came in, and tea began. Sophia would touch nothing, and upon her father asking the reason, she burst into tears.

'Heyday!" cried he.

"If you would only allow us a little more money for our things, papa," she sobbed. "We went over the list to-day, what we have and what we want. We have scarcely any."

"I expect that you have been spending the money foolishly," said Mr. Martyn.

"No, papa. All the things that you would call foolish remain to be bought yet. Papa, we ought to leave home a little decent in the matter of clothes."

He made no reply then, but when he had finished his tea, he drew out his pocket-book, took from it two bank-notes, and gave one to Helen and one to Sophy.

"Now, understand me," said he, "this is all you will have. Had circumstances been with me as they have been, twenty pounds more or less would be of no moment, but that is not the case now. I am doing all I can to retrieve my position, and I believe I should have gone far to retrieve it by this time, but for the conduct of Rutt. That, with what you have had, will make forty pounds each, and if you cannot buy sufficient finery for a wedding with forty pounds, all I can say is, that you must keep single."

He quitted the room as he spoke, and returned to the factory. Elizabeth took the note out of Helen's hand, and looked at its amount—ten pounds.

"I am glad he listened to me," she observed.

"Listened to *you!*" cried Sophy.

"Yes. When papa came for those books this afternoon, I spoke to him, asking him to let you have a little more if he could, as it was difficult to spin out the thirty pounds. You may buy the gloves now, Sophy."

Sophy's eyes were sparkling. Ten pounds certainly

would not purchase silk gowns, and evening gowns, and gloves, and lace mantles, and a hundred other things, but it had come unexpectedly, and she was not in the mood just then to make calculations.

And Helen? Helen took a piece of paper and a pencil, and dotted down the things she would like, and their probable cost. Upon adding up the sum total, she found it came to just nine-and-twenty pounds. So she turned the paper, and put down what she most wanted,—what she thought she could not do without, and added up that. Fifteen pounds five shillings, this time; and there was nothing for it but to go over it again with fresh subtraction.

While doing this, one sole thought kept presenting itself to her; it worried her brain, it knocked against her conscience. To do without these things would not be a matter of life or death—and that other matter, to which she *might* apply the money, almost was such.

Presently she put the paper and pencil in her pocket, and went upstairs to her room, and there she sat down seriously to think. Helen Martyn had strong innate conscientiousness, a powerful sense of the just and the unjust, a keen perception of the precept: "Do as you would be done by." Her conscience was aroused, and she could not lull it to rest.

Should she spend this money upon herself, or should

she divert it from its purpose, and give it to Mrs. Rutt? For one thing she scarcely saw how she was to manage without the additional clothes, and it would certainly be a very great blow to her vanity to do without them; for another, she scarcely knew whether the money was so entirely her own property that she might give it, or would be justified in giving it. On the other hand, there was the performing a good action, the helping that poor woman in her need, there might be the changing of the whole current of the boy's future life. If Bob remained here, unguided, unprotected, who was to foresee what mischief he might fall into? This poor ten pounds might save him from it.

Sorely perplexed—and yet the innate conviction lay upon her that she must and should give the money—Helen Martyn bowed her head upon the bed, and breathed a word for guidance. She had been taught that wonderful truth, that those who consult God need no other guide. A very few minutes, and she went downstairs again. Sophy was talking nineteen to the dozen about the fresh purchases to be made on the morrow: at that moment all was couleur de-rose to Sophy Martyn.

"Helen, we must go out the instant breakfast's over, or we shall not be home before Mr. Ware arrives. We may leave the house at nine if we try."

"Yes," replied Helen, but her tone was somewhat hesitating.

"Elizabeth, I hope you will go with us. Your judgment is so good, you know. And without you," added Sophy, ingenuously, "I may be spending nearly all my money in waste."

"I will go if I can," said Elizabeth. "But you had better make a list to-night of the things you require. Put down the sum you can afford for each; and do not be tempted, when in the shop, to go beyond it."

"I'll do it now," said Sophy.

Helen meanwhile waited until her father came in. As was almost certain to be the case (do not we all find it so?), because she wanted him to come in earlier than usual, he was considerably later. The clock had struck nine when she heard him enter, and go into a room that was chiefly used by himself. She ran down to it.

Mr. Martyn was standing with his back to the door, searching apparently for something in his bureau, the lid of which he held open. Helen advanced and stood near until he had leisure to attend to her. In a minute he turned to her with a questioning glance.

"That ten-pound note that you have given me, papa: may I spend it in any way that I please?"

"To be sure you may," replied Mr. Martyn, with a slight look of surprise.

"I mean, papa, may I lay it out in *any* way?" she repeated. "Suppose I wished to appropriate it to something quite different from clothes—may I consider it entirely mine to do so?"

"You can do what you like with it," he said. "My private opinion is, that the money I previously gave you was sufficient without this. However, you have it."

Helen went upstairs, put on her bonnet and shawl, and stole quietly from the house. It was a fine moonlight night, and she had no fear of going alone. She knew that the money, to be of use, must be given that night: Mrs. Rutt had told her that she should be away on her road to Liverpool with morning light. As she was turning into the lane, she met the boy, Bob. He thought himself perfectly alone, and he was giving vent to his emotion in the still night.

"Bob, is it you?"

Ashamed at being caught, Bob turned away. Helen would not appear to have noticed it. "I want to say a few words to your mother, Bob. Is she alone?"

"Yes, she's quite alone. I'll walk with you, Miss Helen."

They went along side by side; Helen steadily; Bob rather noisily. The boy was trying to make it appear that such a thing as weeping, for a bold young man

like himself, was amongst the physical impossibilities of life.

Mrs. Rutt was upstairs, but came down when she heard them. The settled look of despair upon her face would have wrung Helen Martyn's heart, but for the secret she held within her. She was shy and timid at giving, feeling quite as uncomfortable in it as Bob had felt at being caught weeping; and the explanation was given, and the ten-pound note laid down, more awkwardly than graciously.

But to see Mrs. Rutt's joy!—to see the changed countenance of poor Bob as he stood in a corner, his lips apart, his bright colour fading from his cheeks with emotion! Helen's eyes were wet, as the blessing she had given came home to her heart, and I fear Bob in that moment looked upon her as the most real angel he had ever had any conception of.

But Mrs. Rutt had scruples in taking it. She feared Miss Helen Martyn had procured it at some great sacrifice or inconvenience to herself.

"No; I will tell you the truth about it," said Helen, candidly. "It has been no inconvenience to get it, for papa gave it me unexpectedly this evening; and the parting with it will not entail much sacrifice," she added in a cheerful tone. "It was given me to buy additional things for my marriage, Mrs. Rutt, but I can do without them. It is better that I should be

married with a less extensive wardrobe than I had deemed necessary, than that Bob should be left behind you here."

She had no time to listen to the heartfelt thanks, to the prayers for her own welfare; she must hasten home again, lest her absence should be discovered, and cause a commotion. Bob Rutt followed her out in silence, to see her home.

And in silence they proceeded along the lane. Bob did not speak: his heart was full; and Helen was feeling, as she had never yet felt in her life, the truth of that golden precept, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." She was asking herself in wonder how she could have put, even for a moment, the question of her own finery against this good work. At the end of the lane they were in the bustle and lights of Wexmoor, and Helen stopped.

"You need not come any farther, Bob. I can run on by myself now."

"I'll go with you to your door, Miss Helen."

"No, I would rather go alone. I am all but there. Good-bye, Bob. I wish you all good wishes."

"Miss Helen," he said, clasping the hand that was offered him between both of his, and struggling hard to subdue all outward emotion, "I shall never forget what you have done this night. I am sure that my mother will repay you as soon——"

"No, no, Bob, I don't want to be repaid," she interrupted: "I shall be leaving here almost directly, you know. I hope you will get on in the land you are going to, and that will be my repayment. Fare you well."

She hastened on, leaving the boy looking after her, his heart full, his gratitude illumining his face. Bob's first thought was to wish he was a grown-up man and a gentleman, that he might marry Miss Helen Martyn, instead of Mr. Ware. He deemed it impossible there could be two Helen Martyns in the world.

With the morning, Helen had to tell what she had done. It was quite impossible that she could suddenly decline to make any more purchases, without confessing the cause—that her money was gone; and equally impossible not to be obliged to disclose what had become of it. Elizabeth called her foolish; Sophy opened her cold grey eyes, and wondered whether Helen was quite sane. "The *whole* of it given!" she reiterated, "why, you can't buy one single thing more! What *will* you do?"

"I shall manage very well with what I have," was Helen's answer. "We have a very good wardrobe, you know, Sophy; and I shall contrive sundry changes in my old dresses to make them look like new. I lay awake last night thinking how it could be done."

Yes; it is wonderful how different things look seen

from different points of view. When Helen, like Sophy, had felt angry and mortified at the small sum allowed them, she regarded her wardrobe with the utmost disparagement; but now that she *wished* to make them do, they seemed really good enough and extensive enough for anything she could require. Half the worry of life would disappear, if we could control our own rebellious minds and cultivate a more contented spirit.

But Helen had to encounter worse than the reflections of her sister's—the anger of her astonished father. Mr. Martyn was really displeased: perhaps all the more so because the Rutts had been the objects of Helen's bounty. But in any case he would have looked upon it as an absurdly ridiculous act: as we look upon some of the feats of chivalry of the old days of romance. He reproached Helen, telling her that money was not so abundant with him, and that if she had no need of it she should have given it back to him.

"You told me I might use it as I pleased, papa," was Helen's deprecating answer. "I asked you if I might do so."

But the reminder only made Mr. Martyn more angry. In point of fact, he had given little thought to the matter when Helen applied to him, carelessly supposing that if she did not wish to spend it upon

clothes, it was only because she had set her heart upon some other superfluity. Helen felt thankful that the Rutts were really gone, lest in his displeasure he might order her to reclaim the money from them.

Mr. Ware arrived in the course of the day, and the story was told to him. Without openly blaming her, Helen could see that he looked upon it in the same light as her father, and there was ridicule in his voice when he spoke of her "knight-errantry," which made her cheeks burn. Poor Helen shut herself in her chamber, and wept bitterly. In that moment she felt tempted to wish she had not given away the money.

PART THE SECOND.

I.

MR. VAVASOUR'S PROMISE.

THE sultry summer's day was drawing to its close, and the cooler air and slight breeze which came up with the twilight was inexpressibly refreshing.

In a small but very pretty drawing-room, whose windows looked over the lawn to the high-road, sat two ladies on this sultry evening. One of them was not doing anything: unless anxiously watching every omnibus which came past, laden with its freight of gentlemen returning home from their labours in the City, could be called something. She is a very pleasing-looking woman, graceful and lady-like; and her countenance would be even more pleasing, but for the almost painfully anxious look it wears just now. You would guess her to be perhaps eight-and-thirty: in reality she is several years more, but Time has passed lightly over her. On those fair, calm, serene counte-

nances he does not leave his mark as he does on more stormy ones. Do you recognize her? Her eyes are dark blue, and her silky brown hair is abundant yet. She wears a pretty muslin dress, with a white lace collar, matching the lace in her open sleeves. It is Helen Martyn: or rather, Helen Ware; for she has been Mr. Ware's wife ever since you saw her last in those bygone days.

The lady opposite to her is little and thin, with quite a grey complexion, and a cap shading her remnant of scanty hair. She looks as much more than her age as Helen looks younger; in fact, any one would take her to be the elder of the two. Only note the contrast in their hands! Helen's are small, young, delicate hands yet; those others are prematurely old and wrinkled. It is Amy Martyn. She has partially recovered from the affliction of her childhood, but it has aged her before her time.

Time had wrought its changes. When Mr. Martyn died, and died an impoverished man, leaving nothing behind him, a grave question arose as to what was to become of Amy. Elizabeth had died long before, and there was only Amy left. "She must come to us," Helen had said to her husband. "Yes," he replied, "I suppose she must: poor Sophy, with her cares and her children, cannot be burdened with her."

Poor Sophy, indeed! Those fond hopes of future

greatness, cherished, as you may remember, by the two bridegrooms elect, had turned out delusive. They often do so in ordinary life. The Reverend Mr. Gazebrook had never been remembered in his remote Welsh living, but lived there still; and poor Sophy, in her small parsonage home, with her nine children, had had her temper irretrievably soured in the struggle to bring them up, and to make both ends meet as she put it. It was clear that she could not give a refuge to Amy. Mr. Ware had not risen, either; he held the same situation at the same salary; the board would have been glad to raise it, as they told him every Christmas, when they made him a present, but they could not afford it, for the company was not a rich one, and though it did not decline, it did not advance. Still, with Helen's good management they were tolerably at ease; in luxury, as compared with Sophy; and Amy was welcomed by them. Amy made herself as useful as she could; her hands were pretty steady, and she could manage plain sewing: she is at present, you see, hemming one of a dozen white handkerchiefs which lie neatly folded before her, and which are already marked with ink in full—"Martyn Ware."

The orange tinge in the western sky fell on Helen's features, on the smile of hope which hovered on her parted lips, parted just then with the eagerness of

expectation. A city omnibus had drawn up close to the gate, and a gentleman, whom she could not yet see, was getting down from the other side.

"Here he is, Amy."

Amy Martyn glanced up by way of answer, in, time to catch the bitterness of disappointment which fell like a dark cloud on her sister's face. The gentleman had come in view, and proved to be not him for whom she was looking.

"Is it not Martyn?" asked Amy.

"No. It is Mr. Ware."

But do not mistake her. Not because it was her husband who had alighted did her voice fall to faintness, her heart turn to sickness, but because she had expected some one else: some one whom she feared she *could not trust* to remain late in town as she could her husband.

A great fear had lately fallen upon Helen Ware. They had never had but one child, a son, named Martyn after his grandfather; and how she loved him tongue could not tell. It is not well; it is not well for a woman to have one only son, for he is all too apt to become her idol. I am not saying this with special reference to Mrs. Ware. She did love her boy—none save God knew how much—but she had never spoiled him, and she was more anxious for his eternal than for his temporal welfare. Only of late had the fear

fallen upon her that he was in some way going wrong.

A fear that had taken hold of her very being. She dared not breathe it to others, to her husband, to Amy; she scarcely dared breathe it to her own heart. *How* Martyn was going wrong, or in what particular manner he was transgressing, she could not think, did not know; but the living fear was there.

Mr. Ware came in: a tall man, with grey hair and quiet manners. Helen rose. "I thought you expected to be very late to-night, Edward?"

"Yes; but the meeting was put off to another day. Is Martyn home?"

Helen answered quite carelessly, as she turned to ring the bell. "Not yet; I dare say he won't be long."

"It will be different, then, from what it has been lately," was the remark of Mr. Ware, as he turned to leave the room.

Tea came in, and they sat down to it; Helen making it, as usual. It had grown dusk then, and the lamp was lighted. Afterwards Mr. Ware paid a visit to a friend who lived close by; a gentleman addicted to scientific pursuits and experiments, which Mr. Ware was fond of joining in. But for these frequent evening absences, he might have known more of the general irregularity of Martyn's return.

Helen threw a shawl upon her shoulders, and went out to the lawn. Hot as the day had been, a dampness had arisen now. No one saw her in the dark night, and she laid her head gently upon the low gate, and listened for the omnibuses in the distance. With the appearance of each one her heart beat with renewed hope. All in vain. They passed; they passed in succession, one after the other. Weary and sick, she turned in as the clock struck eleven.

Amy had gone to bed; she scarcely ever sat up later than ten. Her husband, as Helen knew, would not be long, for eleven was the signal for his quitting his friend. But not of her husband, not of Amy, did Helen think; they were in safety. She threw herself into a chair with a long-drawn sigh.

Just then the roll of another omnibus was heard and she started up. "No," she said, heart-sick with the past hour and what it had brought, "I will not go; it will only be another disappointment." And she sank down again.

But it came on slowly and more slowly, and at length stopped. Mrs. Ware went to the door then, and looked from it. Yes! it was her son at last.

He came in at the gate, a gentlemanly young man of twenty-one, with a pale and somewhat gentle face, very much like what hers used to be. Helen waited.

"Martyn," she whispered, "you are late again."

"Not very late, mother. It is only eleven."

"Where did you stay?"

"I went home with Vavasour, and somehow the time slipped on."

"Martyn! you always say that!"

Martyn laughed.

"Yes, I think I do very often go home with him."

Ready as the replies had been, there was a nameless something in the tone which grated on Helen's ear; a sort of evasion—as if he were not telling the whole truth. The miserable conviction lay upon her—had been upon her for some time now—that he did not tell her the whole truth; that there was something to be concealed. In vain she strove to draw more and more from him; she never succeeded; she could come at nothing certain, but she did fear Martyn was going wrong. She might never have suspected it at all, but for picking up a torn note in Martyn's handwriting: it appeared to be an urgent appeal to some one about money—money which some one ought to have furnished—and it stated that there was nothing before him but ruin, unless the some one "came down" with it. So much she managed to make out of the fragment. She showed it to Martyn; but he laughed it off, and said it only concerned some fellows in their house. Mrs. Ware was tolerably satisfied at the time:

but the fear and suspicion had grown upon her ever since.

"Will you take anything?" she asked him to-night.

"No, thank you. I suppose every one's in bed."

He sat down at the table as he spoke, carelessly opening a book that was on it: and at that moment Mr. Ware's step was heard outside.

Seeing his son seated there, a book before him, it is probable that Mr. Ware supposed he had been home some time. He began describing the fine experiments at which he had been assisting; he was always full of them after these evening visits. Helen listened mechanically: she heard the words "condensed air," "syphon," "electric phenomena," and many others, without the least power of connecting them. Her attention was fixed on Martyn. At first he had responded to his father, made every show of listening eagerly, of being powerfully interested; but now a vacant expression had fallen on his face, a far-off look seemed to rest on his eyes; he was lost in his own thoughts, and it looked very much as if those thoughts were troubled ones.

A very desirable situation, as was supposed, had been found for Martyn Ware in the house of Hill and Aukland, West India merchants; and he had now been there four years. The first two years he earned nothing; the third year they had given him thirty

pounds; this year he was to have sixty; the next year one hundred. In short, his prospects were sufficiently good, and there seemed no reason why he should not in a few years be gaining his five hundred a-year salary; other clerks were doing it. The firm was in Mincing Lane. Mr. Hill was the partner in England; Mr Aukland resided in Jamaica, where they had a corresponding house. A great portion of Martyn's particular duties lay at the custom-house, passing entries for goods, and so on—but this will not interest the reader.

After breakfast on the following morning, Martyn and his father went to town together, as was their general custom: they had to be at business at the same hour, ten o'clock. It was striking ten as Martyn entered the house in Mincing Lane; he was always punctual, always attentive to his duties. The head clerk of the room in which Martyn sat was already at his desk, and he looked over his spectacles to see which of the three under him, attached to that room, was coming in.

"I thought it was you, Mr. Ware. Don't take your hat off. This entry must be passed the first thing."

"Very well," replied Martyn. And it may as well be remarked that his civility, gentlemanly manners, and punctuality had rendered him of good report in the house.

As he stood for a moment, looking at the paper the head clerk handed him, some one else came in. Quite a notable person this last, resplendently grand. He stood six feet high, was of very dark complexion, and might have been pronounced remarkably well dressed, but that his ornaments were profuse, and shone too much. His clothes were of the best and newest material, and well made, such as a gentleman might wear. A light kid glove was on one hand, and two rings were on the other; the cable chain crossing his waistcoat was a double one, several trinkets dangled from it, and a diamond pin glittered in his blue stock.

"Good-morning, Mr. Mann," said he, raising his hat in a somewhat affected manner.

"Good-morning," replied the clerk. "Be so good as step round to the post-office, Mr. Vavasour, and see if the letters are ready. The mail is in."

Mr. Vavasour looked thunderstruck at the order; a little supercilious also.

"*I* step to the post-office?" he repeated.

"If you please," said the clerk, with quiet authority. "Young Jones is not here yet this morning; he is ill; and Mr. Ware must go at once to the custom-house."

Mr. Vavasour put on his hat and went out. Martyn, who had preceded him, was waiting at the entrance-door, looking round with an eager, questioning glance.

"The West India Mail's in, Vavasour," he whispered.

"So Mann says," was the reply; and the careless, drawling, indifferent tone with which Vavasour spoke, bore a marked contrast to the anxiety of Martyn's—an anxiety that amounted to pain.

"You have not your letters yet?"

"Is it likely? I shall get them, I suppose, in the course of the day."

"Vavasour, I am quite sick with suspense," was the impassioned rejoinder of Martyn Ware. "I am not fit to go about my business."

Mr. Vavasour laughed heartily.

"I can't help it, Ware," he said, in a tone of half apology for the laugh. "You are such a fidget! Never was your equal, I should think, under the sun."

"Think of the stake," said Martyn.

"Stake be bothered!" cried Mr. Vavasour, pleasantly. "My good fellow, it will be all right. Such 'stakes' are risked and got over every day."

They had been walking on together; but now their roads lay in different directions. Martyn stayed to say another word.

"Will your letters be directed to Mincing Lane this time, or to your rooms?"

"As if I could tell! To Mincing Lane most probably."

"Well, put me out of suspense, Vavasour, as soon as you can."

Vavasour nodded: and the two clerks parted.

But it is very probable that Mr. Vavasour would fire with indignation if he heard himself called a clerk. The son of a wealthy West India planter, he had been sent to Europe for his education, and had received a comprehensive one; though it may be questioned if he profited by it as much as he might have done. A private clergyman's first, King's College next, Germany afterwards. Then he was placed in the house of Hill and Aukland, by the desire of his father; not with any view of his continuing in it, but simply because Mr. Vavasour the elder deemed it expedient that he should acquire some notion of business before his return to Jamaica. No salary was paid to him, and he was not looked upon in the light of an ordinary clerk; but he had to do what was required of him.

He had entered the house the previous summer, rather more now than twelve months ago. His fame had preceded him. A rich young West Indian, coming into the house as a gentleman, not as a clerk! No wonder a commotion was excited among the regular employés; and the commotion was not lessened when he arrived. His tall and really fine person, his very dark skin, his black hair and whiskers, his expensive style of dress, his ever new gloves of the lightest tints, and his glittering ornaments! Of the clerks, some laughed at him, and called him a fop; some

envied him; all stared at him. There are young men in this London world who believe that a ring displayed on their own finger is the grandest sight in life: when Mr. Vavasour appeared amongst them with *two* rings, their admiration knew no bounds. They envied him for something else—his apparently unlimited command of money. That he was supplied with money in a reprehensible degree—reprehensible, considering that he was thrown on the world without control—was undoubted.

Take him for all-in-all, he was an affable, pleasant sort of man. He made himself agreeable enough to the clerks of the house, assuming no airs over them; but the only one with whom he formed an intimacy was Martyn Ware. Martyn was essentially a gentleman, and it was in Martyn's room that a place was assigned to Mr. Vavasour; hence, perhaps, the inducing causes to the close friendship that sprung up between them.

Is the word "friendship" a fitting one in such a case? Scarcely, as it seems to me. That word ought to imply an intercourse, good, thoughtful, almost holy: but the intercourse of Mr. Vavasour and Martyn Ware was rather evil than good. Until they met, Martyn had been of unquestionably steady conduct: one of those sons for whom a mother's heart will glow in thankfulness to God, who has kept

them from the temptations of the world. Not so after the intimacy was formed. The word fast—so disagreeable a word to my ears, that I cannot bear to write it—might be applied in its worst signification to the manner in which Mr. Vavasour spent his evenings, sometimes his nights; and that terribly contagious thing, example, drew Martyn into the vortex.

How he hated himself! Gambling, and money-spending, and singing-rooms, and suppers, may be very delightful recreations at the moment, but they *do* leave their sting upon the conscience of those who have been trained as Martyn Ware had been. They generally leave something else—debt. Debt; embarrassment; despair: and they had left all these on Martyn. If Mr. Vavasour, with his large allowance, could not keep out of debt—and he did not—how was it possible for Martyn Ware to do so, sharing in the same amusements?

Mrs. Ware suspected, as you have seen, that all was not as it should be; she feared that Martyn was spending more than was justifiable; more, in fact, than he had to spend. She feared the habits he might be falling into; she feared debt. Trifling debt, it may be, that her thoughts strayed to, but yet too great for Martyn and his limited means. What would she have done had she known the reality? A

hundred pounds—no, and a good deal beyond it—would not clear Martyn.

Nothing weighs upon a sensitive mind like debt; and when the hourly dread of exposure is added to it, the incubus is almost greater than can be borne. With parched lips and fevered brain, Martyn Ware proceeded to the custom-house on this day: scarcely capable, as he had confessed to Vavasour, of transacting his business. Vavasour, who was good-natured in the main, had promised to help him out of his difficulties. He wrote home to his father to advance him money in excess of his allowance, and for the last three mails had been expecting the order for it. Some of it was for his own debts, but he intended honourably to keep his promise and help Martyn. Another mail was now in; and Martyn, with a sick longing, anticipated the news it had brought.

When he returned to the office, which was not until past midday, for he had to go to the docks, he threw his fevered eyes around the room; but Vavasour was not in it. Mr. Mann had gone to his dinner, and the junior clerk, Jones, who had now come, but looked pale and ill, was alone.

"Is Vavasour out?" asked Martyn.

"He is gone," replied Jones.

"Gone!" repeated Martyn, not understanding what was implied. "Gone already?"

"Gone for good, I mean," said the junior clerk. "He has left: but I suppose he'll come to see us again before sailing. A letter came in for him by the mail, and another that concerned him to Mr. Hill. I don't quite know about it; but Preston thinks Vavasour has been dipping into debt pretty freely, and that his father has stopped the supplies. The upshot is, that Vavasour has peremptory orders to go home by the first packet, and the governor had him up in his room, and gave him a precious good talking to, and then told him he might be off and see to his preparations."

Martyn wondered whether he was in a dream. The words "his father had stopped the supplies," fell upon him with a cruel shock, causing his brain to reel. His heart-pulses stopped, only to bound on with a rush; his sight partially left him. Young Jones held out a paper.

"Mr. Mann told me to give you this, if you came in before he did. You'll see what it is. He said you had better go at once to your dinner, and then come back and go over the accounts it refers to. They must be sent off by the evening's post."

What Martyn answered he never knew; something to the effect that he did not want dinner. He took the paper, sat down in his place, put it before him on the desk, and cast his eyes upon it. All mechanically;

mechanically as a machine works: utterly incapable was he just then of seeing or hearing anything. Young Jones was scratching away busily with a pen, and did not observe him.

"When does Vavasour sail?" asked Martyn, when the silence had lasted some five minutes.

"Well, the mail's in before its time, and the other does not go out for three days. Hill told him that if he chose he might get away by that one. Oh, Ware—I forgot to tell you! Mr. Aukland's come."

"Ah," said Martyn, with indifference. "He was expected last time, somebody said."

"He is upstairs now with the governor. I have not seen him. Preston says he——"

The clerk stopped. Coming down the stairs then, nay, at the very door of their room, through which they must pass, were Mr. Aukland and Mr. Hill, who in the house was irreverently styled "the governor." The junior partner had arrived in town that morning from Southampton, having travelled from Jamaica by the packet which had brought the mails. It was the first visit Mr. Aukland had made to Europe since his connection with the house: a report was afloat in it that he would remain for good, partially superseding Mr. Hill, who was growing old and rich, and that another partner would be taken in to reside in Jamaica.

Young Jones lifted his eyes with some curiosity; Martyn would have done the same, but for the awful news just told to him touching Vavasour. Mr. Hill came in first, a bald-headed, very fat man. Mr. Aukland next; a tall, thin, gentlemanly man of seven or eight-and-thirty, with dark eyes and a pleasant look. Mr. Hill halted when he reached the room, and began explaining to his partner the peculiar duties connected with it.

"Where's Mr. Mann?" he asked.

"Gone to dinner, sir," said young Jones.

"Oh—ay. What accounts are those, Mr. Ware?"

As Mr. Hill put the question he approached Martyn. The stranger followed him, and they stood close to the desk.

"They are Moresby's, sir," was Martyn's answer—and he thought himself lucky to be collected enough to answer it.

"Moresby's? They ought to have been sent off yesterday. How is it they were not?"

Had it been to save Martyn's life, he could not have told why. A dim recollection arose to him that some particular cause hindered it, but memory seemed to fail him. The opening of the door saved him from answering. It was the postman who entered. He walked straight up to Martyn's desk and laid down a letter. Mr. Hill had stretched

out his hand for it, but the man spoke its address aloud.

"Mr. Martyn Ware."

More reeling of the brain for Martyn; more heart-sickness. He thrust it into his pocket, trying to conceal his whitened countenance from the notice of his master. Too well he guessed its contents—a peremptory demand for money, which he had not to give.

Mr. Hill suspected nothing—saw nothing. He went out with his partner, and Martyn contrived to drag through the day and its duties. The moment he was released he tore up to Westminster in a hansom cab to Vavasour's lodgings.

It was all too true. Vavasour, in his good nature, had waited in for Martyn, who, as he knew, would be sure to come. But he could not disguise the facts, however he might wish to soften them. No money had arrived for him. Mr. Aukland, a friend of his father's, had come armed with credentials to see Vavasour off without delay, to see his legitimate debts paid: but not a penny, saving for unavoidable personal expenses, was he to give Vavasour. Old Mr. Vavasour had grown frightened and cautious.

"If some one has not been writing a confounded long yarn to him about me, I'm not here!" exclaimed young Vavasour. "My asking him for a paltry three hundred extra never could have brought forth this

row. Besides, I put it upon back German expenses."

"What am I to do?" gasped Martyn, sinking into a chair.

"Do? Well, the first thing is to come along with me and have a rattling good dinner. I have had nothing all day. I shan't dislike the change for home, Ware. I have been getting tired lately of this fast London."

How sick, how tired of it Martyn had long been, he alone could tell.

"Oh, if I were only clear of it—if I were only emancipated from this horror!" had been his inward cry, day and night. Once released, not even Vavasour could have dragged him into the vortex again. But release, it seemed, was not to come, and Vavasour's light tone drove him nearly mad.

"Don't, Vavasour, for Heaven's sake! Have you no pity for me? Ruin is at hand, and I can't escape from it. I'd rather throw myself into the nearest pond than live to face it."

"Ware, look here!" answered Vavasour, with more impulsive feeling than he had been ever known to show. "We are both in the same hole, and perhaps you'd never have got into it but for me. I am being helped out of it, and I swear that you shall be. The first return mail that goes out of Jamaica after my

landing in it, shall bring you the money. You may trust me, old fellow, for I swear it."

And Martyn, believing in the good faith of Vavasour, did trust him.

II.

THE FALL.

It was a fiery temptation. It was a temptation that I trust you, my readers, will never be exposed to, in conjunction with its exciting cause, the grievous necessity for yielding; and Martyn Ware, honourable though he was by nature, honestly as he had been reared, succumbed to it.

The fraud seemed so easy, and the difficulty he was in so great! Nearly a month after Vavasour sailed, that difficulty reached its climax, and the unhappy young man knew that, ere the morrow's sun should have run its course, all would be known. To be arrested for the debt was inevitable; he could not conceal himself as some can; he must be at his post whether or no, and the sheriff's-officer could choose his own hour for taking him, all leisurely and comfortably. To fall into this disgrace; to forfeit his place in the house of Hill and Aukland—for that would be the inevitable result; to prove to his good

and dearly loved mother what a worthless, deceitful scoundrel he had been—the thought of all this nearly turned the brain of Martyn Ware.

Oh, if the good ship, then bearing to him the help which Vavasour had promised, could only skim, swiftly as a bird, over the waters! He reposed the blindest trust in the promised help of Vavasour; he never for a moment would allow himself to think that it could fail him; or, if the thought did dart across him, he sprang up from it and plunged into some vortex of daily business, escaping as it were from himself, for it was a contingency too frightful to think about.

Oh, if the fair ship could only make an impossible voyage, and come in before her time! Two weeks yet, three weeks yet—how did he know?—ere she could be in and bring him salvation. In vain he tossed on his uneasy bed at night; in vain he flung himself from it, praying that some miracle might save him. The ship *could not* come in before she was due, and those relentless creditors were merciless. Only a week or so—two weeks it might be—to wait, and all would be smooth, and he need not be sacrificed! If he could only run away and hide himself in some cavern for the intervening time; if he could only drop into a prolonged sleep, as the people do in the fairy tales, and wake up at the moment that good ship was touching land, he need not be sacrificed! But he

could not; he could not! He had to deal with the hard realities of every-day life, not with fiction.

Let us give Martyn Ware his due. He dreaded the shock to his mother far more than the consequences to himself. He loved and reverenced his mother as I believe only those children, who have been brought up rightly, *can* love and reverence her. From his earliest years Helen had striven to lead him to his duty; earnestly, gently, untiringly, had she pointed out how God loved him, and how he might live so as to deserve this love; she had made the good path to him a pleasant path. My friends, rely upon it, it is only such mothers as these who are loved by their children with a fond love—who are reverenced by them more than anything else on earth ever can be reverenced.

Yes; it was the thought of his mother that made the worst trouble to Martyn Ware. If he could only keep the knowledge from her! if he could only stave off matters for this short week or two, and receive the money, and relieve himself from his embarrassments, she would never know what a vile, ungrateful castaway he had been. From henceforth he should return to good ways, to sober evenings, to rational pleasures; and it was no shallow or transient resolve this, but the firm, fixed purpose of Martyn's mind. He had had enough of folly and sin; he had had enough of deceit; but

to leap over the intervening weeks, or to soften the hearts of those who held his fate in their hands, was alike impossible.

It was at this critical juncture that the temptation came. Its precise details I would rather not relate, and you will probably deem the reserve expedient; sufficient to say that a large sum of money—ninety-two pounds—belonging to the firm, fell into Martyn Ware's hands. It was encompassed about by all the apparent immunity from danger that often attends these temptations. The circumstances under which the money was paid in were peculiar; the circumstances altogether attending it were unusual; and it seemed all but an impossibility that discovery could arise before Martyn had the opportunity of replacing it by the arrival of the mail. For one thing, Mr. Hill was absent. He was taking a holiday; and until his return, which would not be until after the arrival of the mail—unless the mail foundered at sea—there would be really little chance of discovery. Any one else would have said so as well as Martyn.

And so—and so—Martyn Ware yielded to the temptation.

But do you think it brought him the relief he sought? Do you think such temptations yielded to *ever* bring relief? Ah, no. From the very hour of his taking the money, a horrible fear, like unto nothing

he had ever in his life experienced, fell upon him. Night and day a yawning gulf seemed before him; he on its very brink, ready to fall into it, to be annihilated for ever. He almost wished he *could* be annihilated for ever, as a less terrible fate than this living agony.

What had been the pains and perils he had escaped from, compared with those that he had invoked now? The very worst position that *debt* could have placed him in, was as nothing—as *nothing*—by the side of the consequences that might be drawn on his head by *crime*. With the proceeds of the order (for in point of fact it was not actual money he took, but an order for it—the same thing when cashed) he set himself free from debt; at least, from pressing debt; but he had increased his peril, his perplexity, his remorse, a thousand-fold. Martyn Ware had not been constituted by nature for the commission of crime; he was endowed with a strict love of justice, with lively conscientiousness; and such men, should they unhappily succumb, cannot live under the burden it entails upon them. How willingly, oh how willingly! would he have undone his work, and gone back to the lighter embarrassment from which he had been so eager to escape! To be taken by a sheriff's-officer, and civilly marshalled to one of the debtors' houses, would have been enough for his mother to bear; but to be taken by a different sort of official and confined, without hope or sympathy,

within the strong walls of a criminal prison, what would that be!

A groan escaped him as the vision rose before his mind; rose, as it seemed, with the prevision of fatality. He could not undo his work! the money was gone, and there was no possible means of recalling it. The wonder to him now was, *how* he ever could have been so mad and wicked as to have used it. Wicked he knew he had been, but he did believe that he must have been mad, or he never would have done it. Worse than all, with the taking of the money his confident hope changed, and he began to doubt the faith of Vavasour, as surely as he had believed in it. He tried to hope still; he tried to do battle with his poor sinking heart; and thus he lived on as he best could, until the West Indian mail came in.

It came in, that packet: and you scarcely need to be told, I should think, that it did *not* bring the expected relief; for this kind of dependence, of expectation, proves so almost invariably a failure, that it seems superfluous to record it in this additional instance. The mail brought a letter from Vavasour, but it brought no money. He had found it difficult to appease his father, he wrote, who accused him of having been doing what he could to "go to the bad," and he found it impossible to draw money from him yet. He would try hard to get it by the departure of

the next packet, and he hoped Ware would continue to "rub on" until then. Of one thing he might rest assured: that the money *should* come to him earlier or later, for he would be faithful to his promise.

Martyn Ware sat at his desk, staring at the letter. He tried to read it again deliberately after his first rapid glance at it, but he could not do so: the characters were dancing before his eyes, sparkling and gleaming as if they were living fire. Discovery was inevitable: long before the next mail was in (but he had no hope now in *that*), Mr. Hill would be home, and he would find it out the very first day. As he sat thus, his brain throbbing, his spirit ebbing with a sick faintness, Mr. Aukland passed through the room on his way upstairs, and turned to Martyn.

"I want you, Mr. Ware."

He crushed the letter in his hand, and followed that gentleman to his room. Mr. Aukland, his hat off, was already seated at his desk. The clerks scarcely knew whether they liked Mr. Aukland or not. He was kindly and genial in his manner to them, but so imperative in matters of business, so entirely a man of business himself, and so uncompromising in exacting that their duties should be performed to the letter, that quite a revolution had taken place in the house. Mr. Hill, easy and lenient, rather addicted to dropping asleep at his desk after his early city dinner, had

allowed things to go on very much as they pleased, and the clerks to have an easy life of it; but all that was changed, now that Mr. Aukland reigned.

Mr. Aukland bent his dark eyes on Martyn. "I hear that Lovibond's account has been received and cashed, Mr. Ware. It was paid, I find, to you, but I don't see it entered."

Every drop of blood forsook Martyn's face. His heart stopped still, and then leaped onwards with a bound of agony. This was the money he had received and kept. He strove to answer, to give any excuse that came uppermost; something to the effect that he "would look," "would see about it;" but the words scarcely came forth from his trembling and ashy lips. It was utterly impossible that Mr. Aukland should not detect that something was wrong.

What questions he would have asked, it was impossible to say, but Martyn was spared for the moment. One of the clerks came up, showing in a stranger, and Mr. Aukland nodded to Martyn to go down.

He did not know how he got down. He did not know whether his head was on his shoulders or whether it was off them. He seemed not to be himself, but somebody else—an experience we may ourselves have gone through in illness, in a fever-dream. He heard Mr. Mann address him as he was about to

sit down to his desk, telling him there were those samples of sugar to be got from the docks, and just time enough left to do it before the gates closed, if he hastened. And Martyn put on his hat and went out.

As he walked through the bustle of London, steering his course mechanically, he put his hand into his pocket for the letter; he had only superficially read it before: had mastered only its broad facts, not its details. But the letter was not there.

He wondered where he had dropped it. He looked back along the narrow and crowded pavement, but could see no sign of it, and a dread came over him that he had dropped it in the office. Dread? Why, if he had; if the letter had been read by Mr. Aukland and every clerk in the place, it could not tell them half as much as must be known in a few hours' time from one end of it to the other.

He returned from the docks just before the office closed. The resident porter stood at the door, and Martyn asked him if he had seen or picked up a West Indian letter; he had lost one: but the man said he had not seen any.

"Is Mr. Aukland gone yet?" asked Martyn, as he walked in, putting the question as indifferently as he could.

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Mann was yet at his desk, and he spoke for

some little time with Martyn about business matters, quite in his usual tone. It was evident that he had not seen the letter. Martyn looked about for it, but could find no trace of it, and he came to the conclusion that it had been lost in the street. What mattered it where? Ere the setting of to-morrow's sun, the whole world would know the guilty fool he had been.

He went home, and that night all was told to Helen. Believing himself alone, heavy groans had burst from him, which his mother happened to overhear. She stole to him; she sat down by him; she confessed what grievous fears had long been upon her; she prayed him to have love and confidence in her, his mother: and Martyn told her all.

What a night it was for her! She retired to rest as usual, not to excite observation; but how she lay through it, her unconscious husband sleeping by her side, none can tell. Her son, whom she had been striving to train for heaven; her darling son, of fair report in the sight of the world, to have ended thus! How fully she trusted him, how truly she knew that she might trust him, when he said that could this pitfall be escaped from, he would, with God's help never fall into another.

There appeared to be one little chance—that Mr. Aukland would listen to her prayer for mercy, and forgive him. *Her* prayer; Helen's: who else was

there to offer one? Much as she should dislike the office, sensitively as she should shrink from it, she must, nevertheless, go through it. She must present herself before that great and dreaded man (great as her son's master, dreaded as his accuser), and beseech him to spare that erring son—to conceal his offence in consideration of his strong temptation, his bitter repentance, his inexperienced youth—not to blight his prospects at the very threshold of life. She would beseech it in mercy to herself; she would pray to be allowed to repay the money: and though she had it not, she would find it, even if she had to sell all her personal possessions.

With this fixed resolution in her mind, Helen rose. She went to Martyn's room and told him. It would be productive of no good, he despairingly said: but she persisted in trying. It was necessary that she should be at the office in time to catch Mr. Aukland on his arrival, and she had to invent some plausible excuse—of wishing to get some shopping over before the heat of the day came on—for going up to town in the omnibus at the same time as her husband. Mr. Ware talked half the way to town about Martyn's unusual dilatoriness that morning in not being ready for the omnibus. If he had only known that the dilatoriness was assumed, that he dared not go!

Mr. Aukland was already there. With the West

India mail in the previous day, and its load of business for them, he was not a man to be tardy at his post. A whole heap of papers, of letters, lay before him on his desk, when a card and a message—that the lady asked to see him upon urgent business—were carried to him. He glanced at the former: "Mrs. Edward Ware."

"Desire the lady to walk up," he said in answer.

She came up the stairs. She closed the door, and threw back her veil, and disclosed a face white with an agitation it was utterly beyond her to suppress. Mr. Aukland had risen to receive her; and he courteously, with every manifestation of respect, handed her a chair.

But she was too much agitated to avail herself of it. In fact, it may be questioned if she so much as saw the movement in her agony of emotion that threatened to overwhelm her. She stood up and grasped the railings of the desk with one hand, and entered upon her prayer.

With a rapidity that gave him no opportunity for interruption, with a tone that betrayed too well the repressed anguish, she told her tale. She told what she had come for—to beseech pardon for one who was a guilty sinner, but dear to her.

"It is the turning-point in his life, sir; the crisis of the years that have passed, of those that are to come,"

she breathed, hardly conscious in her trembling vehemence what she did say. "Upon your mercy depends his well-being here; perhaps that hereafter. I *know* that he will never transgress again, and if you will only allow me to refund the money privately to you—it—will——"

She could not go on. Mr. Aukland, still with every token of respect, took her hands in his; he smiled at her with his pleasant lips, his friendly eyes.

"Do let me speak, Mrs. Ware. Can you suppose that *I* should betray *your* son? Don't you know me?"

Know him? She looked up at him in surprise. She knew him by hearsay; she had never seen him. What did he mean? Her silence spoke her bewilderment, and Mr. Aukland smiled.

"Have you forgotten Bob Rutt? I am he. Look at me and see if you do not trace something of my old features. *Yours* have not altered.

Bob Rutt! Robert Aukland, that influential West India merchant, the poor Bob Rutt of the days gone by? It could not be. But it was even so: and she knew, she felt, that Martyn's peril was over. In her revulsion of feeling she sank down on the chair and burst into tears.

At that moment there came a knock at the room door. Mr. Aukland drew it open about an inch. Some

one wanted him on business, and young Jones had come up to say so.

"I am engaged," was Mr. Aukland's short answer, delivered in so sharp, so imperative a tone, that Mr. Jones shot down the stairs again in consternation. But the interruption did more towards recalling Mrs. Ware to herself than anything else could have done.

"I did not even know that your name was Aukland," she said, the tears not yet dry upon her pale face. "Or—yes, I suppose I did know it in the old days, but I had completely forgotten it; you were so universally called Rutt. Certainly I never once connected you with the Mr. Aukland of this house. I can hardly believe it now. I see the likeness, I recognize your face, and yet—it appears incredible."

"I did not stay long in Washington," he observed. "About a year and a half, I think; and then an opening was found for me in Jamaica, in this firm, which at that time—as perhaps you may know—was Sewell and Hill. I had been in it fifteen years when Mr. Sewell died, and I then succeeded to a share in it. On the whole, I have been very prosperous, Mrs. Ware."

"Oh yes," cried Helen. "And Mrs. Rutt? Is she living?"

"She died six months ago," he answered, glancing involuntarily at the crape on his hat. "I was able to

make her a good home in Jamaica—a happier one, I believe, than she had ever enjoyed before. I wrote once to Wexmoor for news of you, but did not obtain it. The answer received was, that Mr Martyn was dead, and his family had dispersed. The very first day of my arrival here I recognized your son; the name 'Martyn Ware' attracted my attention to him, and I traced in his features the strongest possible resemblance to yours. Yours," he significantly added, "had not faded from my recollection."

"And—you—will not refuse to save him?" she said in a timid whisper.

"Refuse to save him! Mrs. Ware, do you forget all I owe to you?" he rejoined, his own tones trembling with the earnestness of their emotion. "But for the sacrifice you made for me, I might be a poor working man now, instead of what I am; and my dear mother, wanting a home, might have sunk into the grave before her time. Were the whole of my savings—and I have saved something—necessary to extricate Martyn Ware, he should have them."

He spoke with quiet deliberation. Helen, wondering whether mercy so great had ever been shown to any one before, asked a few questions.

"I can understand how it was," he said, "that he was seduced into the trouble and extravagance by young Vavasour. It came to my knowledge that

Martyn had received this order for money and obtained the cash for it—not obtained it in the ordinary dealings of the house, but in an irregular way. It awoke my suspicion instantly. I called him into this room, intending to get the truth from him, but before I had barely asked a question, we were interrupted, and he went down. In going out of the room he dropped a crumpled piece of paper, which I found to be a letter just received from Vavasour. It told me all. That with the remittances this letter was to have brought—and did not bring—he meant to replace the ninety-two pounds taken. Mrs. Ware," he continued, smiling at her, "I made it all right myself yesterday afternoon—at the bankers' and in the books here. It would not have been expedient for Mr. Hill to come home and find it out—and he is coming back to-day."

"How shall I ever thank you!" she murmured. "How can I ever repay you?"

"Nay—I have been saying that to myself this many a year—'How can I ever repay Helen Martyn?' My mother has echoed it in my hearing many a time."

"You will—do you intend to allow him to come back here?" she questioned with great hesitation through her tears.

"Indeed yes. Send him up as soon as you get back again. I have no fear of such a thing as this being

repeated: it will serve as a lesson to him for life. And I will try and push Martyn on in the world; as your benevolence, my dear lady, was the means of prospering me. I should have come down to your house to see you ere this, but since my landing I have had so much to do, Mr. Hill being away. You will allow me to do so?"

Helen's tears fell faster, and she held his hands in her grateful grasp. The great Robert Aukland poor Bob Rutt of the former days, who had only presumed to address her as "Miss" Helen.

"I shall tell my husband now, and he will welcome and thank you, Mr. Aukland. I had not dared to tell him before; he would have been so bitterly incensed against Martyn. He has a perfect abhorrence of anything that approaches dishonesty: and if he had known—that Martyn—— May Heaven bless you, Mr. Aukland, now and always!"

Mrs. Ware returned home. It happened that she took the same omnibus which had brought her. The same conductor stood on the footboard; the self-same advertisements inside stared her in the face. With what a sensation of despair had her eyes rested on those advertisements in going! But now, in her changed feeling, they quite interested her. it almost seemed that she had been suddenly lifted into Paradise.

Martyn was not to be found when she reached home. No one knew where he was. Amy had a faint recollection of having heard the front-door close about an hour before, and she supposed he must have gone out. Helen waited: waited with restless, joyous impatience for his return.

But he did not come in. Hour after hour passed away; afternoon succeeded morning. Helen grew sick and uneasy with an undefined dread. Still he did not come in; and the day drew to it close. She stood at the window, stealthily watching, and could have counted the beating of her own heart. Suppose—in his despair——

A wild rush of terror overpowered her and drove away all consecutive thought. Suspense grew unbearable, and she threw on a bonnet and shawl and went out in the dusky night, some faint idea upon her of looking for Martyn, however hopeless the search appeared to be.

But it did not prove hopeless. She had bent her steps instinctively to the most lonely walk near their residence, one running beside the canal: and there, as she came in sight of it, she saw Martyn looking down at the water. His shoes were dusty, as if he had spent the day in walking.

Was he about to do an ill deed?—one that could never be redeemed? Let us give him the benefit of

the doubt. Did his mother fear it? Who can say? She gave a great cry as she hastened to him, and, clasping her arms about his neck, wept aloud.

"Don't mother; don't! Your trouble is the worst of all. I can bear anything better than that."

"Martyn! Martyn! they are tears of joy, not of grief. I—I—was fearing I should never find you," she sobbed. "Martyn, I have seen Mr. Aukland. He is the Bob Rutt of my girlhood's days, a dear friend from henceforth. He will be your friend through life and will help you on. He paid the money into the bank yesterday and made it all right in the office. He knew you, and never meant to let it fall upon you. Oh, Martyn, my darling, it is true, it is true!"

Martyn grasped a post near him as if for support; he felt sick with suspense lest it should *not* be true. But not long could he doubt the joy that shone in the wet eyes of his mother; and a yearning cry went up to Heaven: to that Heaven which had surely intervened to save him. "Lord, be with me from henceforth! keep me from temptation!"

And Helen knew that her boy was her own once more. She linked her arm within his, and they walked on in silence towards home; the home that would be again a happy one, as it had been before the ill-omened shadow of Vavasour fell on Martyn's path.

Not a word was spoken. Helen's thoughts were buried in the past, and her face was turned upwards to the faint crimson light which yet lingered in the western sky. Very, very present to her in that moment were the ways of God and His wonderful dealings. That little sacrifice which she had made so many, many years ago; the poor ten-pound note she had given away from her necessities, her superfluities, if you will, had brought forth *this.* Long and long had the recompense been deferred—a recompense for which she had never looked, or thought of looking—and now it had come, and come a thousand-fold.

Never had that beautiful promise, which you have all read as often perhaps as had Helen Ware, been more directly exemplified; never before had it come home with so much force to her heart: "Cast thy bread upon the waters; for thou shalt find it after many days."



FEATHERS AND SPANGLES.

FEATHERS AND SPANGLES.

I.

The room was small and bright. Window-curtains of crimson cloth shut out the cold and twilight, quickly gathering over the worn grass, the bare trees of the London square. The fire and lamp burned clearly; books lined a portion of the walls; an easy-chair stood empty on one side the soft hearthrug, inviting to repose when the clergyman should have finished his sermon. He had drawn the table near the fire, and was busy with it.

It was a picture of home-comfort and peace, this study; suggesting that its owner must be one of those fortunate men who are secure from the frowns of a bitter world. The Reverend Septimus Winter liked comfort, and hoped to enjoy a fair share of it to his life's end. He was a tall, good-looking man of thirty-one, hair and eyes dark. Good-looking, in that the features were handsome; but they had a somewhat

severe expression. The house was still and tranquil. His little boy's voice in laughter broke out occasionally in the nursery above; but Mr. Winter did not count that as disturbance; it was what he, a doting father, liked to hear. Claude Beckett, a neighbour's son, had come in to play with Harry. Mr. Winter wrote on steadily. This was Saturday, and his sermon must be finished.

In a moment this tranquillity became alarmingly interrupted. A pistol was fired off, almost—as it seemed—in the very ear of Mr. Winter; it was followed by a shrill cry from Harry. Almost beside himself with terror, apprehending he knew not what calamity, the clergyman started up and rushed from the room. The first sight his eyes caught was that of the two children half-way up the stairs—Master Claude Beckett with a small pistol in his hand. He was a daring gentleman of six, just double Harry's age. Servants were running up the stairs with affrighted faces. Mrs. Winter came out of her bed-room, white as death, a baby clasped in her arms.

There was plenty of terror, but no injury; for the pistol had not been charged. When this was ascertained, and the first agony of fear had subsided, Mr. Winter learned the particulars. The two boys, temporarily left alone in the nursery, had strolled into Jack Winter's room, and discovered the pistol;

upon which Master Claude Beckett was seized with an irresistible desire to let it off. The bright idea occurred to him that he might combine this pleasure with a fright to the household; and he carried it to the stairs that the report might be better heard. The boy's father was a sportsman; he knew all about it, and his own fingers were strong.

Mr. Winter, a hot man—for clergymen cannot put aside their nature any more than other people can—went into a passion. Not with Claude Beckett—though he had difficulty in keeping his hands off that young offender—but with his brother Jack. Jack the Scapegrace. For a long time Mr. Winter had hardly borne with him: this was the climax. A pistol in his bedroom, when there were children in the house!

"Mr. Jack has had it there this week past," spoke up a maid-servant amidst the general confusion. "He keeps it in a locked-up case, sir."

"It appears he keeps it where my children can get at it, locked up or not locked up," angrily retorted the clergyman, biting his lips to keep down harder words. And in that moment he learnt what he had been gradually suspecting to be a fact: namely, that he had grown to *hate* Jack.

Master Claude Beckett was conveyed home in disgrace; Harry, screaming enough to frighten the

London crows (not easily frightened, one would imagine), was consigned to an ignominious bed forthwith; and Mr. Winter went into his wife's chamber. She sat by the fire; a plain, sensible-looking woman, in delicate health, hushing the baby in her arms.

"I am afraid this disgraceful occurrence has frightened you, Emily."

"Well, it did at the time; but I don't mind it now I know the boys are safe," was Mrs. Winter's answer. "The worst was, it woke up Florence with a start, and I had only just succeeded in getting her to sleep."

She pulled the small square of fine flannel off the child's face, and disclosed a delicate little blossom of five or six months old, which looked as if its short days on earth were already numbered.

"It is a great pity she was wakened up; sleep is so necessary for her," sighed Mrs. Winter. "The doctor says it is more to her now than food."

Yes; it was a great pity: Mr. Winter mentally echoed the words. His whole heart was set upon rearing this frail little girl, Florence; and, man of peace though he was by profession, his will was good just then to have pitched Jack and his pistol into the sea, had the sea been near enough to do it.

Going back to his study, he shut the door loudly, drew the easy-chair in front of the fire, and sat down in it, leaving his sermon to complete itself.

If the worst came to the worst, he could preach an old one. A resolution, that had long been seeking an opportunity to be put into practice, grew fixed and firm.

And yet, even in that moment of irritation, when his nature was at its hardest, a qualm of hesitation crossed his conscience, and he sought to show himself that his pretext was a right one. Looking dreamily into the fire, he recalled the past years.

He had loved his mother. If Septimus Winter had never loved anything else on earth he had loved her. She was the widow of a poor naval officer, struggling to bring up her two children well on her small means. It was not very difficult in the cheap country village where they lived. The boys were named Septimus and John (called Jack always); there were eleven years between them. Septimus succeeded in getting to college and was ordained. He was steady, industrious, persevering. A year or two of hard work, of patient hope, of heavy parish duties, and of semi-starvation, and Septimus was appointed to something better in a London suburb. The charge of a church was given him, whose incumbent felt no longer able, through ill-health, to retain it. There was no parish work, no poor to visit, nothing but the Sunday's duty; and Mr. Winter, compared with the past, had an easy life of it. The new fashion of young curates

holding daily services had not come in then, or possibly he would have drifted into it. He began to think that he might turn his weekly leisure to account by setting up a boys' school. He obtained the promise of a few: but he had neither money, nor furniture, nor housekeeper; and he went down home to consult his mother. The result was, that she had her goods and chattels packed up, and went to London. Jack had just gone as indoor apprentice to the village apothecary, and Mrs. Winter was at liberty to dispose of herself.

The school flourished tolerably. It was some struggle and hard work, but both mother and son threw their energies into it; and more than a year passed on. Then Mrs. Winter died. While she was full of plans for the future, saying, "We will do this and that for the school," she died. It does not do to transplant old people, and perhaps the change had been imperceptibly killing Mrs. Winter. She seemed to die of a mere nothing: a cold settled on the chest; three or four days of bed and she was gone. Only a few hours before her death did any one suspect danger. Mr. Winter was correcting some exercises in the schoolroom, after the boys had gone to rest for the night, when a maid came to tell him his mother seemed worse; and he hastened up.

"I have left my furniture to you, Septimus," she

said; "it is all I have to leave. Of course, Jack has a right to half of it; but it could not be taken out of your house. You'll find my will in one of those drawers. I wrote it out myself; but I dare say it is legal enough. As a recompense to Jack, you must give him a home when he comes up to walk the hospitals. I think this is the best I can do for both of you: and God bless you always, my dear sons!"

She died before the night was over, and there was no time to send for Jack. He did not even come for the funeral. Fever was raging in the village, his master was ill, and Jack had to stay where he was. He was of a somewhat careless nature, and did not take it to heart as Septimus would have done. With *him*, everything he cared for in life seemed to have flown away with his mother.

The world is made up of changes. In less than a twelvemonth after his mother's death, the Reverend Septimus Winter had gone up five hundred degrees in the scale of prosperity. He had married a wife with a good fortune; he had been appointed to the incumbency of an excellent living in London; he had disposed of his school profitably. Henceforth he was above the frowns of the world, and the chances were that the sudden rise to prosperity would spoil him. Few men living had a larger amount of self-esteem

than he. He liked to stand well with those above him; he was strangely ambitious at heart.

By the time Jack came up to London, all traces of the old home-life had been done away with. Mr. Winter's house was a handsome one in a fine square, and Jack felt half afraid to tread on the velvet carpets. The few poor things that were their mother's (but which had nevertheless well served the turn of the elder brother), were lost amidst the more sumptuous furniture. Perhaps a shade of annoyance crossed the clergyman's mind at having to welcome Jack as an inmate of his well-appointed home; but he never thought of going from his bargain. His wife, who was kindly-natured, said she was glad to have him.

Jack was nineteen then: a good-tempered, thoughtless, handsome young fellow, swayed by every breath of wind. He fell into very irregular habits: medical students are—what they are; and poor Jack Winter was thrown amidst a very bad set of them. He took to coming home at irregular hours; he lay in bed of a morning; once, when the clergyman and Mrs. Winter were entertaining a baronet's widow, a doctor of divinity, and other great people of the neighbourhood, Jack was seen in the drawing-room corner, blinking like an owl and the worse for drink.

I fear we have neglected him," said Mrs. Winter

thoughtfully, when the party broke up, and her husband felt ready to flay Jack alive. "We have not encouraged him to be with us in an evening, but have let him go his own way. It has been a mistake."

Even so. The clergyman, not best pleased to have Jack in his house at all, had winked at his taking to spending his evenings away from home. A little out of his element in the grand house, and suspecting that his company was not wished for, Jack, in the first instance, went out to relieve them of it; and so dropped into undesirable acquaintances. Mr. Winter, always a steady man himself, made no allowance for his brother, but grew more bitter and dissatisfied day by day.

He sat by the fire now, making much of the resolve that had been silently ripening—to turn Jack from the house this self-same night, converting the pistol into a pretext. A reprobate (so he called him in his thoughts), in *his* house! setting a miserable example to his little son Harry; liable to be talked about by the irreproachable square, which boasted of ladies of title and learned D.D.'s: Mr. Winter's brow grew hot with shame at the thought. Jack had received an offer, as the clergyman happened to know, from some general practitioner living in Lambeth, to go to him as out-door assistant from nine to nine, and receive

fifty pounds a-year. Let him take it. Fifty pounds was enough for a single man to live upon.

The fire was getting low. As Mr. Winter rose to replenish it, he heard the hall-door open; and Jack came up the stairs, singing softly the refrain of that disreputable old song, "Buffalo Girls." Not perhaps that the song was so particularly disreputable in itself; but the Reverend Septimus Winter, a clergyman and a man of correct habits, regarded all such songs as scandalizing, when heard within his sacred walls. It was sung so low that he had to hold his breath to distinguish either words or tune; for, to give Jack credit for something, it must be owned that he generally remembered the sick baby when going up or down stairs.

"Oh, Buffalo girls, won't you come out to-night,
And dance by the light of the moon?"

Open flew the study-door; and Jack, arrested in his upward progress, was authoritatively motioned into it. He was now a young man of twenty; a pleasing likeness of Mr. Winter. Both of them had the same handsome cast of features and bright brown eyes, but Jack's face bore a milder expression. A phrenologist, looking at him, would say he had no strength of mind or will, but was persuadable as a child. He wore a rough coat, out of which the stem of a pipe was visible. Rough coats and pipes were especially obnoxious to

Mr. Winter (Jack had never been allowed to smoke in the house), and the sight of them did not tend to propitiate him now.

There had been some cutting reprimands to Jack before; but never had Mr. Winter attacked him as he did now. Just a sharp short sentence or two, his face white with passion.

"The pistol was not loaded," said Jack, in his pleasant voice. "There was nothing to load it with, either. It couldn't do any harm. Might have killed young Harry? Nonsense, Septimus. What business—if it comes to that—has young Harry to go unlocking the places in my room?"

This was adding insult to injury: and Mr. Winter could have struck his brother in his rage. In his superior age and wisdom, the other seemed no better than a boy to him. What he said he hardly knew; words that in a calmer moment he had certainly never uttered. Jack was told what an unwelcome intruder he had been, nothing less than a burthen; and was bidden to go forth that same night before he was an hour older, and shift for himself in the future.

For a moment Jack stood as one stunned. But, of course, there could be no appeal against the mandate, even had he felt inclined to make any. The house was his brother's; and he had been, in truth, only an interloper in it.

"Very well, Septimus," he said, calmly acquiescent. "I'll just put my things together, and send for them when I know where I shall have a roof to put them under.

"You need be at no fault for that," retorted Mr. Winter. "The situation you spoke of is still open. Had fifty pounds been offered to me when I was your age, I should have thought it a fortune, and saved out of it."

"Ah, yes, no doubt."

Jack went upstairs, treading softly. It did not take a quarter-of-an-hour to "put his things together." They were bundled into his small portmanteau and the big sea-chest that used to be his father's—which sea-chest had been deemed too shabby for Septimus, the clergyman, to take to, and so fell to Jack. Jack trampled the things down after the most approved bachelor fashion, and so got both receptacles locked. There was no room for the pistol-case, or for all his books; he went down carrying some of them in his hands, and stuffing his pockets.

When he passed Mrs. Winter's room, the door was open. Seeing her standing there, Jack looked in.

"How is the dear little Florence to-night?" he asked, in a whisper: for he saw the child asleep in the cot.

"Is it you, Jack? I don't see any difference. Come in and look at her."

Jack Winter loved this child dearly. With all his failings, he had a tender heart. Leaning over the cot, he watched it sleeping its calm infant's sleep. That they would never succeed in rearing the child, he felt sure of: his professional eyes saw things more clearly than his brother's. Bending down, he kissed its little fingers again and again—a last farewell.

"I am very sorry about the pistol, Mrs. Winter," he said, joining her as she stood at the fire. "There was no real danger; of course, I should not have been so carelessly stupid as to risk that; but I am vexed it should have alarmed you. Good-bye!"

"Why, where are you going, Jack?" she exclaimed, yielding her hand to him.

"Septimus and I are parting. We have not pulled quite well together, as I dare say you know; so perhaps it is all for the best. Good-bye! and thank you warmly for the house-room and all else you have given me."

He was out of the room and down the stairs before she had recovered her surprise, or could ask further explanation. She went to her husband's study to seek it, and found it empty. Mr. Winter had gone out.

But the clergyman was back again shortly, for it was the dinner-hour. He had only stepped out for a little fresh air after his discomposure, and perhaps

to avoid further encounter with that ill-doing youth, his brother. When Mrs. Winter inquired about Jack, he replied that he could not have him in the house any longer.

"Oh, Septimus, he is so young to be thrown on this wicked London world!" was her involuntary remonstrance. "Without a home! What will he do for a home, and for a living?"

"He has both open to him," curtly returned Mr. Winter; for no man brooked even the shadow of a reproof less than he. "He will have fifty pounds a-year to begin with. Had I gained that at his age, Emily—as I told him—I should have thought Fortune had come to me, and saved out of it. Jack is all right; and the sooner he feels he must earn his own bread-and-cheese the better."

They went in to dinner, Mrs. Winter dismissing the subject with the soup. She always supposed her husband knew best, and yielded to his judgment in everything.

He thought he did know best; he said to himself that he had done the proper thing. Jack must be made to find his own value as a unit amidst the many millions in the world; to feel the necessity that lay on him to spend his days in work—not in junketing, and smoking, and idleness. And the Reverend Septimus Winter was so satisfied with the relief of

finding his house once more free, that he felt light as a bird emancipated from a cage, and took an extra glass of his good wine in very hilarity of heart.

And never once, throughout the dismissal, had the remembrance of his mother occurred to him, or how she and he, in the old, old days, had both loved Jack.

II.

TWELVE years elapsed. Twelve years! A long period of time to look forward to; not much to glance back upon, when they present only a smooth, unbroken track, as they did to the retrospect of the Reverend Septimus Winter. He had done nothing but go up and up in prosperity. He had another living added to his rich one; he was an honorary canon of a cathedral (and a very great honour it appeared to a man of his turn of mind); his name stood high with the world, socially and clerically; he was regarded as one of the saintly divines of the day, quite a beacon-light. He fully believed he was one; and was puffed up with vain-glory.

There had been one care—one intense disappointment—Mr. and Mrs. Winter were childless. The delicate little blossom, Florence, had faded soon: and strong, troublesome, indulged Harry a couple of years afterwards. How keen the grief to Mr. Winter had been, he alone knew; how bitter the disappointment at finding, as time went on, that his wife had no more

children, he would have been ashamed to tell. He had got over it all now; had ceased almost to regret it; his affections were set on the substantial good of the world; and on the ambition growing rife and more rife within him. Men—and women too—must possess an object in life. Mr. Winter sometimes preached from his pulpit the desirability of that object being Heaven: Heaven alone: but he had not made it his full object yet. He thought the bishopric he coveted was advancing nearer, and his heart glowed within him.

But he was a good man; as the world—ay, and as many not of the world—would count goodness. Charitable, humane, active in the service of religion, denouncing sinners, upholding the righteous. What though he was ambitious? though he saw in dreams that mitre perched upon his head?—To him it seemed quite a right and legitimate ambition; shared by at least (under the rose, be it spoken), quite half the advanced members of the Church. He did his full duty to every one whilst he looked patiently out for the mitre, treading his way in spiritual pride, making much of his really good qualities. Had any one suggested to Mr. Winter that it was just possible he might not be on the right track for heaven—the track taught by Christ—he would have put them down complacently for their impertinence.

And Jack? Jack had never been seen by Mr. and Mrs. Winter, scarcely been heard of, since the Saturday night that he kissed the baby's hand in farewell (fearing to wake her if he kissed her face), and went out with his books and his pistol. On the Monday following a porter had brought a barrow for the sea-chest and portmanteau. Mr. Winter was out at the time, or he might have asked where they were to be taken to; or he might not. In the elation caused by the riddance of so undesirable an inmate, Mr. Winter was quite content to let things be as they were. He was of rather a close nature, and it was a great thing to be relieved of the third at table. Perhaps it may be more correct to say selfish, instead of close; since he grudged nothing that could contribute to his own enjoyment and his wife's. But he grudged the cost of an interloper.

It might have been about two months after the little baby had left them, when Harry had become doubly precious, if that were possible, that Mrs. Winter, sitting at her window, and looking out on the budding trees of the square, asked her husband after Jack. In answer, Mr. Winter broke into a tirade against Jack's ingratitude—never to have called upon them; never to have written so much as a line of thanks for the hospitality shown him!

"He thanked me," said Mrs. Winter.

"He didn't thank me," said the clergyman.

"Where is he?" she resumed.

"Down at that place in Lambeth; there can't be a doubt of it," confidently asserted Mr. Winter; "but for keeping that or some other situation, we should have had him back sponging on us."

"Septimus," she said, after a pause, "I think I would and go see him if I were you. Perhaps it may be a duty. He has come into my mind so often of late—I don't know why—that it has made me think a great deal of him. He is only twenty, you know; too young to be left quite without friends or counsel; go and see him."

Mr. Winter a little resented the advice; but, after taking plenty of time for consideration, followed it.

It was one of spring's brightest mornings, inviting to a walk, when Mr. Winter set out, and perhaps there lay his chief inducement to go. Treading the streets with his usual self-important tread, in his spotless clerical garments, he went inquiring about Lambeth, address in hand. It was in an obscure and very populous part of it, where men and women walked about in tatters, and impudent children tumbled over each other in the gutters, that he came to an anchor. The house was a small surgery and chemist's combined, the proprietor uniting both professions. It crossed the Reverend Mr. Winter's mind to turn

back again, there and then; he had no wish to claim a brother of his in such company. But he did go in, and saw the surgeon himself, making up pills behind the counter.

Mr. John Winter? Oh ay, the young man who had written for particulars of the situation. He made his appearance one Saturday night unexpectedly, thinking to enter upon it; but the place was filled up: he had been too long deciding.

Such was the substance of the answer. Mr. Winter inquired if he knew where Jack had gone to, or where he was then; but the doctor could give him no information whatever. So he went home again and told his wife. Jack had withdrawn from the hospital, and was not to be heard of there.

"He will come to us fast enough when he wants anything," remarked Mr. Winter, dismissing the subject with lofty summariness. And from that hour to this he had never renewed it, never sought to find out Jack: had, in truth, almost forgotten him. It is so easy in prosperity to keep a satisfied conscience.

So the clergyman went complacently on his prosperous way, a rising man; and his once delicate wife had grown strong and healthy; a woman portly and comfortable to look upon.

It was at this period, just twelve years after Jack's

departure, that a blow fell on Mr. Winter. In the full zenith of his pride and power, before a silver thread had mingled with his luxuriant brown hair, or a wrinkle crossed his handsome face, he was stricken suddenly almost to death. Driving his spirited horses in the park, amongst the great people of the land (none greater in self-importance than he), his wife by his side, his two servants behind, there arose an accident. In turning by Apsley House, something fretted or frightened the horses: they dashed at the gate, and the carriage was overturned. Mrs. Winter and the servants were scarcely hurt; Mr. Winter lay as he fell. He was conveyed home, and those of the faculty most eminent in name and skill were speedily gathered round his bed. His right leg was broken; and, worse still, there was some inward injury. Dangerous symptoms arose, and Septimus Winter lay face to face with death.

No one living can realize what such a position must be, unless brought personally into it. For three weeks Mr. Winter's life hovered in the balance; not knowing one hour, of all that time, but that the next he should be called to meet his Maker. The medical men, in obedience to his wish, had informed him his true state; and without reluctance. What r thought they, to hide it from so saintly a pi whose reputation for holiness and good worl

equalled that of the Archbishop of Canterbury Mr. Winter listened to the possible fiat; and he knew that it was God's fiat, not man's.

. His mind, intellect, passions, judgment, were sound as ever they had been; the injuries affected not these: nay, perhaps his faculties were the keener for the quiescence of body. "Set thy house in order; for thou shalt die and not live," was the sentence ever surging in his brain. He had read it often to his flock; but now, alas! it had come home to him; and in letters of fire!

He was not fit to die: he knew it quite well, lying there in his mental agony. There could be no tampering then with conscience; and it seemed that, for him, there was no balm invented to heal its stings. He, the morally upright and self-righteous man, who had stood on a lofty pinnacle to teach and guide other souls, saw things now in their true colours. God had shown him his sin.

Of what value now was all the prosperity he had put his trust in? The riches he had striven for, the pomp and pride of life, the mitre looming in the distance—he turned from them with loathing and abhorrence: the pursuit of them had been only a snare and a delusion, for he could not carry them with him to the grave. He knew that his heart had been set on these, and not on heaven.

But the one great weight was his brother. His hardness of heart in regard to Jack was brought home to him in a marked and special manner. Quite at the first there was some slight delirium; during which present events were obliterated, and he was back in the past. It was on the second evening after the accident that he subsided at dusk into a delirious doze. He thought he was at their old home in the country village; he, and his mother, and Jack. They seemed to be parting; that he, Septimus, was going forth to seek his fortune in the world—as in reality he had done all those many years gone by. His mother held his hands in hers; all his old intense love for her was working within him; it seemed that she had given him some great help, at a cost to herself, to get him on. Little Jack stood by, looking up with his bright brown eyes, his ready smile; and his mother suddenly released one of her hands and laid it on Jack's shoulder, as if presenting the lad to him. "I leave him to you," she said; "take care of him, and bring him to me hereafter." And he put his own hand out to Jack and accepted the charge. Just then some crash awoke the sick man—it was only a gust of wind against the window-panes—and he started in wild fear. For a few happy moments he thought the dream was reality—that he was back in that dear old village, and only just entering on life.

As the truth revealed itself, and he remembered that his mother was dead, he a great man in the world, Jack nowhere, a groan burst from him. How had he fulfilled his mother's wishes?—for she had left Jack to him—what should he say when he met her? And the meeting must be at hand, if indeed he was crossing the threshold of this world! When the nurse, hearing the groan, glided to the bedside, the patient's face looked livid as with some mortal terror.

That it was this vivid dream that in the first instance caused remorse to set in with so intense an agony, there could be no doubt. Conscience, awakened by his position, could not have failed to bring Jack before him with a terrible reproof; but not perhaps as he was brought now. Whether dream or delirium, Septimus Winter believed that it had come direct from God: and the words "I will require of thee thy brother's soul," seemed to be mingling over with other mandates, in his ears. He wondered now whether his own children had been taken from him in requital.

The three weeks' hovering on the verge of death came to an end, and there was a faint change for the better: the doctors then said that he might recover, not that he would. How many more weeks he lay when the issue was still doubtful, he ceased to count. The bodily pain was not much; it was the mental

pain. All that time it seemed to be nothing but one never-ceasing struggle with God—like unto Jacob's prolonged wrestling with the angel until break of day.

It is a period that cannot be talked about—when a man is brought thus before God, and shown his sin. If Septimus Winter had never previously realized the truth of that wonderful parable, the Pharisee and the Publican, he did so now. What though the poor Publican might have killed, and rioted, and stolen, his guilt was nothing as compared with that of the self-righteous Pharisee: and verily it appeared to the clergyman that the worst sinner of this bad London world was nearer heaven than he.

A firm conviction lay upon him that Jack was dead; it seemed to be as much a certainty as though he had known it. Hence the barrier that lay between him and peace. Every time that he would have raised his feeble hands to plead for Christ's atoning blood, his brother's remembrance came between. There seemed to be pardon for the whole world; excepting him. If Jack had died in sin, unredeemed, how could he, who had driven him to it, ask for forgiveness? Over and over again would he have thanked God for showing him his sin: but that it must lie with so heavy a weight on his soul, and he could not dare to hope for pardon. All that he could say—say day after day, and night after night, groans bursting from his miserable heart,

and tears gushing from his eyes—was the despairing cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

In time; in time—he knew not how it could be, he saw not how it was possible, except that God's ways are not as our ways—he began to experience a foretaste of peace; to think that even he might be forgiven.

Never was there a man so changed as he, when he at length rose up from his weary bed. Thinner and weaker of course in frame, and he would limp a little all his life; but the change lay not in that. It was in his manner. The rather pompous and self-contained man, with a clear voice and speech that the world could not ruffle, had become subdued, humble, meek as a little child. Heart and conscience alike ached always; ached to pain.

As soon as he was sufficiently strong, he instituted a search for Jack. In every quarter presenting the faintest probability of hearing of him, did the clergyman inquire. He looked up Jack's former companions, disreputable young medical students of twelve years ago: he wrote to his native village; he put advertisements in the second column of the *Times*, and in other papers. Nothing came of it. He never very much expected that anything would come of it. The mental conviction that Jack was dead had not decreased in the least degree; but he sought to find

the possible consolation of hearing that he had died in peace.

At length, when he had given up all hope of ever finding traces of Jack, they came. The medical man in Lambeth (for he had been one of those first applied to), perceiving Mr. Winter's anxiety on the point, had good-naturedly promised to keep his eyes open, and let him know if any tidings transpired. One morning, when the clergyman was sitting listlessly by the fire—he was not yet capable of active employment—this gentleman was shown in. He came to say that he thought the question was at last set at rest, and Jack found.

"Living or dead?" asked Mr. Winter, in his subdued tone; but his heart was beating so fast that he could scarcely put the question.

"Dead. About six years ago."

There was a long pause. The doctor proceeded to tell how he had gained these tidings: through a poor patient he was attending; a man who had once been a cab proprietor but was reduced to being only a driver. In this man's room the doctor had happened to pick up an old medical pamphlet, on the cover of which was written "Jack W." It brought to his mind Jack Winter. He made inquiries, and found that a young man, commonly known by the name of Jack, had lodged in the cabman's house some six years ago,

and died there. By the description, he concluded it must have been Jack Winter.

"I have brought the man with me," said the doctor. "I thought it would be more satisfactory to you to see and question him, than to hear about it second-hand. He is waiting in the hall. I cannot stay myself, for I am pressed for time this morning; and perhaps you would rather see him alone."

"One moment," gasped Mr. Winter, laying his trembling fingers on the doctor's sleeve to detain him. "Was the death a happy one?"

"Well, no; I am afraid not."

The medical man went out and the driver came in—a short man in a fustian coat, with a respectful manner, the traces of illness on his face. Mr. Winter bid him to a seat by the fire.

He knew what he had come to tell, and told it. When he (the speaker) was better off than he was now, and had a little house of his own, a young man came to lodge in its spare room. He called himself "Mr. Jack;" nothing else. He had been in the physic line; a doctor, they thought; but something or other had kept him down (perhaps bad conduct), and he he had no means of living then, so far as they knew, except by selling his things. In less than a month after he came to them he died; died of drink. The age, description, manner, all tallied with Jack.

"Did you never hear him mention any other name?" questioned Mr. Winter.

"No, sir. We looked amongst the few things he left after his death, but couldn't find any trace of what he'd been or who he belonged to. They wasn't worth five shillings; he had parted with all for drink; and the parish buried him."

A keen pang shot through Mr. Winter's heart; not at the ignominy of the burial—he had learnt to think *that* of no moment whatever—but at the miserable desertion in which he had died.

"There were one or two torn books and tracts—medical tracts, I mean, sir," resumed the speaker, and in all of them was written the name 'Jack W.' They got torn up for fire-lighting afterwards; all but one of the tracts; and how that come to be saved I don't know: but my wife sometimes stows things away without knowing it. Looking for some rag in a box the other day, when the doctor was there, she turned it out; and he, seeing it concerned physic, picked it up."

He had brought it with him. It was a treatise on some branch of medical science that had made a noise in the world some six or seven years before. The clergyman carried it to the window, studying the "Jack W." At first he did not think it was Jack's writing; then he fancied it was like what Jack's would have been if he had lost nerve.

"This seems to have been written with a shaking hand."

"And his hand shook always, sir; shook with drink. A great pity it was to see a nice young fellow, not much better than a boy, destroying himself by inches. My wife once asked him where he thought he should go to; but he scoffed at all thoughts of that sort."

"Then he did not die in penitence—in peace?" faltered the clergyman.

"He died as he had lived, sir; swearing at the world and defying Heaven."

It was all told. When left alone, Septimus Winter buried his burning brow from the sunlight, and wondered how he should live on with his remorse and despair.

III.

DRUMS beating, trumpets blowing, voices shouting. "Mareschino's Circus" has taken root upon the plain, and the town natives are alive with wonder. It seemed to have sprung up in the night, like a mushroom, the wide circular tent, with sawdust within and caravans without; but to arrive in the night, and to get things up by morning, was Mareschino's way of taking the world by surprise.

The procession had gone round the town in all the blaze and glory of marvellous horses, coaches of glass and gilding, music playing, ladies and gentleman in feathers and spangles. A lovely child of seven was in the midst of it, on a species of platform propelled by invisible wheels, wheels that perhaps might belong to human bodies: from which elevation she distributed handbills to the populace, in a manner that might have been strangely graceful but for its shrinking timidity. The procession had got back now, and the ladies and gentlemen were sunning themselves on the platform over the entrance, to the admiration of

the excited crowd; the little girl standing in front, and handing down the bills as before. She wore a blue gauze frock studded with silver stars, and white satin shoes; blue ribbons were binding back her flowing brown hair. Never had a sweeter face been seen in a circus, or out of it; never a more refined, modest manner than the child displayed. The band struck up, "Haste to the Wedding," and the handbills dropped in showers.

"Oh, do take us! *Do* take us, Uncle Winter!"

In his failing health and energies, the Reverend Mr. Winter had been persuaded to try what change would do for him, and had come to this gay and populous place with his wife. Change for him, he mentally argued: could any "change" heal *his* malady? Mrs. Winter's sister was sojourning at the same place with her children; and the little ones sometimes fastened themselves on their uncle. In the old days he would have shaken them off: he bore with them yieldingly and gently now. They had made a stand before the new attraction—which seemed to them, as to others, a very paradise—and he could not get them on.

In the scramble one of the bills came into Mr. Winter's hands; he listlessly cast his eyes over it. It set forth the wonders and seductions of the coming evening's performance: the feats of horsemanship, the tight-rope dancing, the marvellous interludes of the

two celebrated clowns. Mr. Mareschino was "Master of the Ceremonies;" his daughters, Miss Angelica Mareschino, Miss Miranda Mareschino, Miss Bettina Mareschino, were to take large shares in the performance. Involuntarily Mr. Winter wondered which of the three that lovely child might be: he supposed she must be one. Other names followed; ladies and gentlemen; and the "Fairy Sylph" was to appear for the first time. But the bill went for nothing: with that dancing and music before their eyes, that sumptuous attire, than which nothing could be more dazzling, who had leisure to look at bills? The ladies and gentlemen were going through a languid quadrille now, and the spangles glittered and the feathers waved.

"Uncle Winter! Oh, do, do! The best seats are only two shillings; and children—that's us—half-price. It begins at seven: do bring us!"

Well, why not—if he could give a little pleasure to these eager children? he asked of his weary heart. And he said he would; and bought the tickets there and then.

In the past days, when he was the model of goodness, Mr. Winter had assuredly picked up his black coat skirt, if within a mile of such contamination; but somehow his views had undergone a change. People, despised before, he felt humble by the side of now. The men and women belonging to this circus might

all be miserable sinners; but what was he? They might well be nearer God's saving mercy than he was.

And, behold him in the front row when evening came, the delighted children under his wing. It was a rude place at best: circuses put up in a night cannot be finished off with crimson velvet and adorned with brass nails. They sat upon bare boards that did not seem too steady, and Mr. Winter had some doubts of the flaring lights. Mareschino's Circus, with all its show and glitter, was not upon the high ropes: before the performance began, its ladies and gentlemen walked in and out amongst the spectators, and did not disdain to answer if spoken to: which was condescending on their part.

The clergyman sat, his brow leaning on his hand: it had become a favourite attitude of his as if he always felt pain there: glancing on occasionally when forced to it by the children. The tight-rope dancing was not dangerous; the clown's jokes were nothing but what all the world might hear; and the riding of the Misses Mareschino, though it did not show alarming skill, had no unpleasant boldness about it. Applause was loud and generous; gingerbread and fruit sold fast. A louder burst of admiration than usual caused Mr. Winter to look up.

Riding into the arena on a cream-coloured palfrey speckled with red-brown spots, came a lady who had

not before appeared. She wore a short pink satin skirt finished off above with blue; on her head was a golden tiara. Sitting before her in floating white robes was the pretty child who had distributed the bills in the day: and the child held on as though she were shy, or frightened. Referring to the bill, Mr. Winter found these two described as Madame Louise and the Fairy Sylph. The Fairy Sylph looked very much what she was described; but Madame Louise had evidently passed her first youth, and was no longer, to say the least of it, of sylph-like proportions.

Cantering round the arena, the child gradually rose, and stood on the horse, holding, with one hand only, the lady's shoulder. As the pace increased to a gallop, the timidity of the child became more apparent. Mr. Mareschino (supposed to be), parading the centre in a frock coat, blue necktie, grey trousers, and kid gloves, as if he were going to a wedding, seemed to whisper some encouraging words, and cracked the whip he held, not fiercely but gently. Suddenly a large hoop was held before the horse, no doubt for the child to jump through: but the master made a sign and it was carried away again. But for the extreme beauty of the child, to which all the women's hearts warmed, this part of the performance might have been considered tame.

Then this little girl appeared amongst the spectators,

distributing bills of the fresh marvels to be seen at the next evening's performance. As she timidly held, out one to the clergyman, he took her hand.

"My little maid, do you like this life?"

The fair face flushed sensitively. She glanced round, as if the question bordered on treason.

"Papa's ill, sir."

That the answer conveyed sufficient information was evident to the child. "Papa!" As the clergyman looked at her, something in her face struck him as not being altogether unfamiliar—it seemed to bear a likeness to some other face he must have known.

"What is your name, my little one?"

"The Fairy Sylph, sir."

"I mean your real name."

"Florence Winter."

The words, given in a whisper, thrilled through every fibre of the clergyman's heart. Never since the death of his own little blossom and the grief it brought, had that name been spoken lightly in his ears. But the child had gone on with her bills, and was lost to his view.

The fine evening had changed to rain; a heavy storm. Some of it came penetrating in places through the canvas roof, to the discomfiture of the admiring spectators.

* * * * *

Hurrying through the wet streets, their heads down, the woman in a worn old cloak, the child bundled up in a ragged shawl, went they. None would have recognized them for Madame Louise and the Fairy Sylph. In place of the gorgeous pink satin and the white floating robes, were poor garments dull and rusty.

Holding the little hand, the woman was speaking in a tone of remonstrance; almost of threatening: though the voice was not an unkind one. The child caught her breath now and again with a sigh, as if the scolding were deserved; a sound only heard when the heart is charged with grief.

"It's all nonsense, Florence. Fear, fear, fear! It is a good six weeks now that you have been practising, and yet you profess the same fear that you did at the beginning. You want it shaken out of you. How will you do, pray, when you have to ride alone, and go through three hoops of silver paper in each round?"

A passing shiver, an involuntary tightening of the protecting hand, proved that the idea was not liked.

"I wonder Mare puts up with you so long. He has been as kind as he could be—just out of favour to me, and the profit I have brought to the circus in the years gone by. Is it my fault if I'm growing stout? Mare knows it's not. You are a little ungrateful

monkey—and, if you don't take the hoop to-morrow, woe betide you."

"If it were anything but riding!" sobbed the child.

"If it were anything but riding!" echoed the woman. "Of course! that's what every turn-about says—anything but their set work. You are beginning early, young madam."

A violent gust, a shower of pelting rain-drops, nearly drove them backwards. Holding the trembling hand more firmly, the woman pressed along, and turned into a poor and close street.

"I'd rather perish than be ungrateful. There's your poor papa lying helpless, and you refuse to aid him! Who is to do it? Goodness knows, Florence, my will's good to keep you both as I have done, but the unfortunate size I am getting prevents it. What it is makes people grow stout, I can't imagine," added Madame Louise, enlarging upon her own grievance. "I'm sure I have starved three parts of the time, so that your papa might have it. I can tell you what, child—he'll be precious soon in his grave if he doesn't get better. And you keep back from helping him!"

"I'll go through the hoop to-morrow," answered the grieving child.

"Don't cry like that! He'll be wanting to know what has been up. And mind you don't let out about the hoop to *him;* or about the going out in the pro-

cession; let him think you just sit on the horse with me, and no more: he has his crotchets, you see. Here we are."

Ascending what seemed to be the common staircase of a lodging-house, the woman opened the door of a room in the roof. On a bed on the floor lay a man with the bright eyes and wasted cheeks of an invalid. A smile parted his feverish lips when he saw the child, and he stretched out one thin hand to her: the other hand was contracted with the remains of rheumatic fever. She threw back her bonnet and darted forward; knelt down and buried her face on his breast.

"What has my little Florence to trouble her?" he fondly asked, feeling the wild throbbing of her heart against his own.

"We've been so beat about with the wind and rain, Jack," interposed the woman; "it quite frightened her."

She began bustling about to prepare supper: cheese and beer for herself, bread and butter for Florence: and stirring up the fire to make some hot gruel for Jack. Florence, in spite of herself, trembled still.

"My little girl does not like the riding," he whispered. "*I* know."

"Oh yes, yes, papa," she eagerly cried, lest her dread and its frightful ingratitude should be betrayed.

"It is very nice, and the spangles are beautiful; and Mr. Mare is never rough with *me*."

"I know," he repeated in a decisive tone, as if Florence could not deceive him. "It is only for a little while, my darling, please God I get better of this. Say nothing to mother."

The young face was lifted brightly. "Only for a little while!" A promise that brought to her she knew not what of rapture.

"I will do my best until then, papa, and go through the—go through the riding," said she, the forbidden word "hoop" having almost slipped out in her eagerness. "Mother will take care of me till you get well, papa."

"Papa" and "mother." They sounded odd in conjunction with each other. The mother turned round at the moment from the fire, and the saucepan she was stirring.

"I've a drain of brandy for you to-night, and I shall put it in, Jack. Maybe it will send you to sleep."

Drums, and trumpets, and lights, and feathers, and spangles! The next day had come. The evening performances had recommenced, with all its noise and glitter; and Mr. Mareschino had the gratification of seeing an overflowing audience.

In the very spot where he had been the previous night, but alone this time, sat Mr. Winter. Surely it might

have been deemed strange that a disreputable travelling circus (as many clergymen would not have hesitated to style it) should be so attracting him!

Never, since it was spoken, had he been able to get the name, Florence Winter, out of his thoughts; never had he been able to forget the child. He had begun to fancy that the resemblance he saw in her face to some face of the past, was to Jack. Almost he felt persuaded that this child might be his brother's. Jack had once said, in his joking way, when nursing his (the clergymen's) fading infant, that if ever he had a girl-baby of his own, he should name it Florence. The child had talked of "papa." Mr. Winter supposed it might be a step-father, if indeed her true father had been his brother. A thousand doubts kept suggesting themselves to him. Had the child had a legal mother? —Jack was not a likely man to marry. No matter. His ideas on many points were reversed. Time was, when he would have been content to turn his exemplary clerical back on Mareschino's Circus, child and all, as an ill-doing set with whom he could not put himself in contact, but that was over.

The name haunted him. The likeness haunted him. The one had certainly been spoken; about the other he did not feel sure. Placing himself in the way when the grand procession went round the town at midday, he tried to take a good, long look, and see whether

the likeness was fact or fiction. But the elbowing crowds, assembled in numbers, jostled the clergyman roughly, as if asking what *he* did there; and he never caught one glimpse of the sweet face.

And here he was, at the evening performance, his mind in a kind of fever. If this was really Jack's child, it would be something to rescue and cherish it. Not any atonement for the past; that could never be, but a great duty that he might not go from. In due time Madame Louise and the child came in on the spotted palfrey. Each time they passed him in going round the arena, he sought to trace the likeness. But the pace was swift; the glances he obtained were transitory.

Three times was the hoop held before the child. Each time she seemed as if about to make a spring, and did not. Madame Louise seemed to say some sharp words; Mr. Mareschino cracked his whip loudly; and the fourth time she took the spring. It was a signal failure. The child threw the hoop down, and fell herself; not to the ground, for Madame Louise's skilled arms contrived to catch her. That lady looked dark with anger, and the poor child burst into tears. Dropping her gently down, Madame Louise, by way of covering the defeat, put forth her mettle, took one or two daring leaps herself, and rode like mad. The good-natured spectators cheered and cheered again.

The child, overcome with humiliation, was silently making her escape, when she found herself caught by the clergyman. She turned up her little tear-stained face.

"Don't cry," he soothingly said. "You are not hurt."

"It is for papa," she answered. "I shall never be able to do it. Mother is so angry."

"Is that your mother?" pointing to the flying pink satin.

"Yes; she is papa's wife."

He saw the likeness now: it lay in the soft brown eyes. "My dear, will you tell me what your papa's name is?"

"Winter."

"And his other name?"

"Jack."

Mr. Winter did not know whether a spasm took his heart; but it seemed suddenly to stand still. Could it be—*could* it be, that Jack was yet in life?—that the sad history disclosed of the death in Lambeth related to another man? Before he could speak again the child was gone.

It was a fine evening. As Madame Louise and the Fairy Sylph were walking homewards in their dull costume, not many degrees removed from tatters, the former waging hot war on the delinquent, she found

herself accosted by a gentleman in the garb of a minister of the Church of England. He fancied he knew her husband, he said: would she allow him to accompany them home, and see him?

The question took Madame Louise aback. But the speaker reassured her, and they all walked on together. The woman told how helpless her husband had been for months and months; which was the reason of the girl being put to the circus.

"She can't bear it, sir; says she's frightened. It's very ungrateful of her, for she knows as well as I do the state her papa is in: she has the sense and thought of one double her age. He don't like it for her, neither—but what will you?—we must live. Once let her get to ride fearlessly, and she'd be the chief attraction of the troupe: folks take to her looks, you see, sir. The Mares pay us well, for I am his sister."

"Whose sister?" asked Mr. Winter, a little at sea.

"Mare's sister. Mareschino is only the professional name—as I dare say you'd guess. My name was Louisa Mare. The eldest daughter was called after me; but the name would clash with mine in the bills, and so they put it Angelica. The second girl is Maria, and the other Betsy. They are converted for the public into Miranda and Bettina."

"Do you know why this child was christened Florence?" asked the clergyman in a low tone.

"No, sir. I was only married to her father three years ago."

"Papa has told me I had a little cousin named Florence once; he was very fond of her, and she died," spoke up the listening child.

Higher and higher grew his hope. When they got upstairs and into the room, the invalid was lying as usual on the low bed, nearly in darkness. Madame Louise lighted a candle, and held it (intending to be hospitable) so that the flame shone on either face: on the one looking doubtfully down, on the other looking wonderingly up.

"Can it be you, Septimus?"

The words set doubt at rest. With a great gasp, a sob of delirious joy, Septimus Winter fell beside the bed, and clasped poor Jack in his arms as he had never done since the lad's boyhood.

"Oh, Jack, my brother, forgive me, forgive me!"

Jack was too weak to betray much emotion, but the tears shone in his great brown eyes, the slender fingers of his one able hand entwined themselves within those of his brother. No wonder Mr. Winter had failed at first to recognize him; he was fearfully changed.

"Don't ask about it," he said, almost passionately, when the clergyman would have questioned him of his past life. "There has not been much good in it

to tell about. I went to the bad after I left you, and felt ashamed to let any one know where I was. My marriage brought me up for a time. She was a lady, mind, Septimus; a world too good for me, and had some money. We lived in Italy; Florence was born there, and when she was two years old her mother died. What little money was left I soon ran through. I came back to England; and was about as bad as a man can be."

"And—she—is your second wife," whispered Septimus, glancing at Madame Louise, who was on her knees, coaxing up the fire.

"Yes. I fell in with Mareschino's Circus. Mare and I grew intimate, and his sister Louise married me. It was no bargain for her: though you, remembering social prejudices, would say, I suppose, it was none for me. She is an honest woman, Septimus: there are such in a circus troupe as well as out of it. She has been a good wife to me, and cared for Florence. Rheumatic fever set in a year ago, and here I am—dying before I'm middle-aged."

"Not dying, Jack, I trust: if skill and care can restore you."

"Well, sometimes I have hope. Chiefly when I think of Florence. Any way, God has been good to me; for He has shown me my sin. The sin of a wasted life."

Good to both of them; good to both of them. As the clergyman parted with Jack and went home in the moonlight, his heart overflowing with its sense of the mercy the night had brought him, he wondered how he could ever hope to be sufficiently thankful.

But Jack was to die. Love and skill were exerted, but they did not save him. In a pretty cottage of his native village, where he had wished to go, death came to him calmly and peaceably. Septimus and his wife were there, and the child was solemnly given over to them.

"You'll do better by her than I ever should have done," said Jack, his grateful eyes, growing dim now, fixed on them. "She will be happier with you than she could have been with me."

"If love can make her so," murmured Septimus Winter's wife.

"And I know she will have that," spoke Madame Louise. "I'd have done my best by her; but a poor best it would be."

"If you could only be persuaded to live in comfort as Jack's widow—in this cottage, for instance," suggested Mrs. Winter, anxiously.

"Ah, but I can't; thank you kindly, ma'am, all the same. I must stick by the old concern as long as it will stick by me: I shouldn't be happy out of it. I can ride for some years yet. The Mares will be

glad to have me live with them, as I did before I married."

"If it must be," sighed Mrs. Winter, thinking of the frighful discomfort of such a life, "have no fear on the score of Florence. She will be to us as our own child."

"I may come to see her sometimes?—once a year or so?" pleaded Madame Louise. "I know I am only a poor circus-rider, and she is—what she is. It is a great difference."

"Come! YES!" warmly responded the clergyman, with emotion. "Difference? Shall we not all be alike in heaven?"

THE END.

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